

The
Inner Circle

Edgar DeWitt Jones

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Dec. 22, 1914

Mrs. Williams.

THE INNER CIRCLE

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*STUDIES IN SPIRITUAL
AND SOCIAL VALUES*

BY

EDGAR DEWITT JONES

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

ARCHIBALD McLEAN, A.M., LL.D.

President Foreign Christian Missionary Society



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TO MY MOTHER
MARY VIRGINIA RUMBLE JONES



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INTRODUCTION

THE author of this volume is one of the strong and growing ministers among the Disciples of Christ, and is in charge of one of the largest churches in the communion. He is deeply versed in the Sacred Scriptures and is a diligent student of social conditions and of the social teachings of Jesus. In the best sense of the term, he is a popular preacher. He knows the people and feeds them with the Bread of Life and the Water of Life.

Three things may be said of these Studies: First, they are based on the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, and they breathe His spirit. They represent the Christian life as conceived and illustrated by Him. They make goodness and kindness and fidelity winsome and attractive and desirable and they make selfishness and cruelty and falsehood odious and repulsive. Second, they are simply and beautifully written. Their author is a lover of beauty in all its manifestations, and he wields a graceful pen. Moreover, he is a lover and student of the poets and has taken from them "many a gem of purest ray serene" to glorify the theme in hand. Third, they have the merit of

brevity. Any one of them can be read in fifteen minutes.

These Studies are suited to all classes, to the young Christian and to the mature Christian. They can be read with profit on bright days and on dark days, by people who are sick and by people who are well. They can be read in families that are denied the privilege of attending the house of God, and they can be read in churches when there is no minister present. It is believed that no one can read them without being helped in his efforts to live the life of Christ, and no one who is not a Christian can read them with care and moral earnestness without feeling called upon to become one.

The prayer that precedes each study is one of the most valuable features of the book.

ARCHIBALD MCLEAN.

CINCINNATI, OHIO.

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THE INNER CIRCLE

PRAYER

Our Father, we draw near unto Thee because Thou hast come close to us. We thank Thee that having of old times spoken unto the fathers by divers portions and divers manners, Thou hast spoken unto us in Thy Son. Thou seemest not afar off, but at our side, since Thy Son came. Thou seemest not so much a monarch, or a magistrate, but much more a Father since it pleased Thee to show us Thyself in Jesus Christ. Father, we covet Thy approval and we ask Thy forgiveness for our many sins and wanderings afar from Thy love. Forgive us wherein we have failed to succour Thy needy ones; wherein we have been unwatchful and prayerless; wherein we have been rebellious toward Thee, and have turned each one to his own way. Blot out all remembrance of our wayward ways and our wilfulness, we beseech Thee. Our Father, we pray that we may have always the strong desire to follow Thy Son and to follow Him closely ever. May we accompany Him often to the house of mourning and sickness, and there drive away all terror and doubt, and by the comforts of our great faith make dying pillows soft as down, with love and hope. May we linger long with Thy Son in places of prayer, and so find enduring fellowship with Thee, our Father. May we go with Jesus into the Garden and thereby come to know the lasting good of Gethsemane. Teach our unwilling tongues to say "Thy will be done," and so lead us along the way of blessed ministry, of communion and triumphant trust, until the day break and the shadows flee away forever. Through Christ, our Saviour, we ask all of Thee. Amen.

I

THE INNER CIRCLE

"And He suffered no man to follow with Him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James."—*Mark* 5:37. "And after six days Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John, and bringeth them into a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them."—*Mark* 9:2. "And He taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John, and began to be greatly amazed, and sore troubled."—*Mark* 14:33.

WHEN Jesus began His ministry He drew about Him a vast multitude of followers. From this throng He selected twelve as His ambassadors. Then, from the twelve He chose three who were destined to become His intimates and confidential friends. Within the Circle of the twelve was the Inner Circle composed of Peter, James and John.

In some aspect or other these gradations will probably continue as long as human beings differ in temperament, capacity and affection. In some hearts the gospel takes root and bears thirty-fold, in others sixty-fold, in still others an hundred-fold. "I love them that love Me" is not necessarily a selfish or partial dictum in so far as it bears upon the working out of certain God-given laws. He who leans heaviest on the Everlasting

Arms is the most sensible of their sure support. As harvests come in response to rain and sun and soil, so spiritual blessings follow in proportion to faith and hope and love.

A study of the Inner Circle of Christ's apostles cannot be otherwise than helpful to His disciples of to-day. What manner of men were they? To what hallowed places did their association with Christ lead them?

"Peter and James and John." How often the eye catches sight of these names on the New Testament pages. Three fishermen, unlettered, and from the humble walk of life, who became the intimates of Jesus Christ.

Simon Peter is perhaps the most popular character of the entire Bible. Some time ago a widely read religious journal opened its pages to a symposium on "The Person I Shall Want to See First when I Get to Heaven." It was not surprising to find by far the greater number accorded first place to Peter. Impulsive and impetuous of nature, blundering and rash, withal Peter was a loyal soul. If in a moment of weakness he denied his Lord, he spent the remainder of his life confessing Him and died witnessing for His truth. Peter is a striking representative of those impulsive folk who, while they may startle or shock their friends, can be depended upon not to do any underhanded or petty thing.

James? Well, we do not know much about

him. He is not the James who wrote the Epistle of that title, and who was a very prominent man in the Jerusalem church. This James died a martyr to the faith early in the history of the church and by order of Herod Agrippa I. The only trait in his character of which we have any record is that he was with his brother John "a son of thunder," of fiery disposition, and wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume some of Jesus' enemies. With one exception in the Gospel narrative the name of James is placed before that of John, and this perhaps implies he was the older. Whether or not as some have thought this James was a plain and undistinguished sort of man, it is certainly true that membership in the Inner Circle of Christ's followers does not depend upon brilliance or outstanding qualities of leadership. Do we not all know nowadays disciples of Christ whom we would never think of asking to speak in public or read a paper at a literary club, who carry with them the very atmosphere of the Better Land?

John was the rapt, seraphic soul of the three, and passionately attached to the person of Jesus. He it was who wrote the most intimate biography of his Lord, and to him we are indebted for the ineffably tender scenes which took place in the "upper room" at Jerusalem. He was not only the disciple whom Jesus loved, but also the disciple who loved Jesus in a manner tenderly affec-

tionate. In a way John was of the three intimates of Jesus the closest to Him, the nearest and dearest earthly friend of the Master.

Peter the intrepid, James the undistinguished, John the rare, elect spirit—three diverse and varied temperaments, yet all of the Inner Circle. How fraught with interest and encouragement these simple facts are!

The very first place to which Jesus took these three friends was to the house of mourning. The little daughter of Jairus was sick unto death, and the ruler came in his despairing grief for the Great Physician. Accompanied by His disciples, Jesus set out for the stricken home. Before the company's arrival at the house a servant met them, saying: "Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Teacher." But Jesus said: "Fear not, only believe." The house was crowded with mourners, and their wailing filled the place. Jesus requested their departure, and, taking the father and mother and His three intimates, He entered into the room where the lifeless child lay. "And taking the child by the hand, He saith unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise. And straightway the damsel rose up and walked." Surely Peter and James and John never forgot that scene, the bewilderment of the girl, the joy of the parents, the marvel of it all!

Those who would follow Jesus closely will go

often to the "place of mourning," the home of want and trouble. It becomes His disciples to be found there. If they have His mind they will find joy in such visits. It pleases Him to have His followers about such ministries. Some there are who never go to the house of mourning if they can possibly avoid it; they will send others, or supply money, but go themselves they will not. Long ago the wise man wrote: "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men, and the wicked will take it to heart."

Visiting the sick and lonely, comforting the bereaved and disheartened, is a large part of a Christian's duty. Jesus' ministry was full of healing and edifying power. He went about doing good. His parable of the Good Samaritan teaches the duty of ministry to every one who has need, regardless of creed or colour. In the parable of the judgment in Matthew, twenty-fifth chapter, the basis of divine approval is ministry to the needy, and a great sentence in that familiar passage is the one that flames out the words: "I was sick and ye visited me." James in his Epistle thus describes religion pure and undefiled before God: "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

In Washington at the old Baltimore and Ohio railroad station a man was once looking for Abra-

ham Lincoln. An attendant pointed the then little "Tad" out to him, saying that the lad ought to be able to say where his father was. "Tad" said: "No, sir, I can't go and find father for you. He told me to stay right here. But if you'll go out there"—pointing to the platform—"and see a man helping somebody—that's father."

"A man helping somebody"—how appropriate a description of a follower of the ministering Jesus.

The house of mourning affords a vast opportunity for good. At such times the broken heart is peculiarly susceptible to the healing power of Christian faith. Those who visit such homes with Jesus' message of hope are the good angels of this world, and their ministry is mighty in word and deed.

The house of mourning may be such for other reasons than death. Sudden reversals of fortune; domestic perplexities; periods of great mental stress and concern, may come and the presence of tactful, sympathetic friends at such times is like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Especially sad and lonely is the case of many old people who are pitifully neglected. No more beautiful and tender ministry is there than that of visiting such homes, and filling the tedious hours of the aged inmates with pleasant conversation, or readings from the Scriptures, the Christian poets, or other bright and wholesome books.

Of the Inner Circle of Christ is that glorious company of whom Sir Edwin Arnold sang :

“They healed sick hearts till theirs were broken,
And dried sad eyes till theirs lost sight;
We shall know at last by a certain token
How they fought and fell in the fight.”

The next place that Jesus took Peter, James and John was to the mountain of prayer. Ascending perhaps one of the lofty flanks of Mount Hermon, the weary disciples fell asleep while Jesus prayed. And as He prayed He was transfigured. “His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as light.” Then there appeared “in glory” Moses and Elijah calmly conversing with Jesus. Such was the sight that met the astonished gaze of the intimates of Jesus as they awoke out of deep sleep. Peter, in his usual blunt, outspoken way, exclaimed, “Master, it is good for us to be here, and let us make three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” As if in rebuke of this suggestion a cloud overshadowed them and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, my chosen, hear ye Him.” “And when the voice came, Jesus was found alone.”

The members of the Inner Circle seem never to have forgotten this experience. Peter in his second epistle alludes to what they saw and heard “when we were with Him in the holy mount.” John evidently had in mind the transfiguration

when he wrote, "We beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father."

Those who have fellowship with Christ will pray much. Like their Master they will pray before the crises of life that come upon us all; like Him too, they will experience sometimes the exaltations of the soul that come to the prayerful, and make the unseen more real than the seen. Sometimes the prayer places will be in quiet and solitude, but not always such. Isaac prayed in the field, Jacob prayed by a brookside, Jeremiah prayed in a dungeon, Daniel prayed in a den of lions, David prayed in a cave, Peter prayed on a house-top, and Jesus prayed on the cross. When and where we pray is a minor matter, though by special seasons and the quiet hour the soul of man is lifted and the fellowship comes to be exceeding close.

One has to learn to pray, and growth in spiritual life means, of course, a growth in prayer. One's ideas of prayer change as he grows older, and what one could freely ask a year ago he might not so much as think of asking God for now. How well I recall my own childish prayers. I was reared by my grandparents and I used to say the "Now I lay me down to sleep" prayer, and then add to the verse this one petition of my own: "God bless grandfather and grandmother and let them live forever." That petition satisfied me then, for I had a perfect dread of their dying and

leaving me, and for them always to live seemed then to me the greatest boon I could ask. By and by I learned that lengthened breath is not God's best gift, and I left off that petition never to ask it again.

Just as we outgrow "Now I lay me down to sleep," and pass on to "Our Father who art in heaven," so should we outgrow the Lord's Prayer (as a form) for an expression of our own, framed independently and growing out of our personal needs and experiences. Until one gets this far along in his prayer life it can scarcely be said that he has really learned to pray. And yet withal, how great the glory of a child at prayer.

"She sang her little bedtime air,
And drowsy-wise she spoke her prayer.
And as she spoke I saw the room
Open and stretch and glow and bloom;
And in her eyes I saw a ring
Of heaven's angels, listening."

The third place to which the intimates of Jesus accompanied Him was the Garden of Grief. "And they come unto a place which was named Gethsemane; and He saith unto His disciples, Sit ye here while I pray. And he taketh with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly amazed and sore troubled." It was the hour of soul-travail of deep and profound sorrow, and Jesus yearned for the nearness of His closest earthly friends. To His intimates on this occa-

sion He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; abide ye here and watch with Me." And He went forward a little and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

With Christ in the Garden of Grief, is a different experience from that with Him in Jairus' house of mourning. The mourning then was for others and His ministry there was a healing one. In the Garden the sorrow is personal, and He passes through it alone. True, a little ways off are the three, but alas! they are not watching and they are not praying—they are fast asleep. Alone! Sooner or later, we must all stand alone with God.

"It takes two for a kiss—
Only one for a sigh.
Twain by twain we marry,
One by one we die.
Joy is a partnership—
Grief weeps alone.
Many guests had Cana—
Gethsemane had one."

The problem of pain and suffering is as old as humanity. And there still remains in it much that is dark and mysterious. But the light Christ flashed upon the problem is large, and mellow are its rays. He did not accept the dilemma that if God is love He is not almighty, and that if He is almighty He is not love. He believed and

taught that God is both. One thing is certain—Gethsemane with its sorrow accomplished more for Christ than Eden with its bowers of delight could do for Adam.

From out of Eden Adam was driven bearing the evidence of defeat on his face. From out of the Garden of Gethsemane Christ came, the marks of victory on His brow.

“I walked a mile with Pleasure,
She chattered all the way,
But left me none the wiser
For all she had to say.

“I walked a mile with Sorrow,
And ne’er a word said she;
But, oh, the things I learned from her
When Sorrow walked with me!”

“Thy will be done” is sometimes a prayer of resignation, sometimes a prayer of consecration. In Gethsemane it was both.

There is such a grace as chaste sorrow and I have beheld it and felt its gentle, purifying ministry. I knew a young minister’s widow, who, when she lost her knightly soldier of the cross, found fellowship with Jesus in the Garden and ever after carried with her the noble dignity of a chaste sorrow. It seemed as if her presence was articulate and that she said: “He learned obedience by the things which He suffered; and having been made perfect, He became unto all them that

obey Him the Author of Eternal Salvation; and I, even I, have entered into the fellowship of His sufferings."

Of such men was the Inner Circle of Jesus' day composed, and to such places did their fellowship with Him lead them. And lo! the fruitage of such fellowship! James went early to a triumphant martyrdom; Peter, from a plastic type of character, became "Peter the Rockman," and John, the one-time "Son of Thunder," became the apostle of the gentleness and love of Jesus.

During the earthly ministry of Jesus the Inner Circle was small. In these days of His spiritual ministry the Inner Circle is still small. And it is small because most Christians are contented with meagre spiritual attainments and mere nominal membership in some church. Mr. Moody's remark that it yet remains to be shown what wonderful things God can accomplish with a life wholly surrendered to His divine will, is best illustrated by his own life so wonderfully yielded to God through Christ.

The many of us have but touched the hem of Christ's garment. Vast numbers have matriculated in the great School; only a few have gone beyond the first principles of Christ and are pressing on unto perfection. Multitudes have enlisted for the Holy War; only small companies are on the firing line. The masses of Christen-

dom are still on the bare frontiers of the faith, while further in lies the hinter-land where are the green pastures and the still waters and the Good Shepherd.

“Have you heard the voice of Jesus
Whisper ‘I have chosen you’?
Does He tell you in communion
What He wishes you to do?
Are you in the Inner Circle?
Have you heard the Master’s call?
Have you given your life to Jesus?
Is He now your all in all?”

THE LURE OF THE LORD'S DAY

PRAYER

Lord of all grace, we give Thee praise for the Lord's Day institution. Thou art ever mindful of Thy children, Thou knowest our frame, Thou providest for all our needs. We thank Thee that Thou didst ordain a day of rest for man and beast. In the ancient Sabbath we behold justice and mercy exemplified in Law; in the Christian Lord's Day we see mercy and justice fulfilled in Love. Help Thou us to use the Lord's Day in the spirit of Him who gave it birth. Save us from a petty or partisan observance of this large day on the one hand, and preserve us from a careless, irreverent regard for this institution on the other. May we keep this new first day as Jesus kept the ancient seventh day, by attendance at worship at Thy house; by ministry to our friends and neighbours, by visiting the sick and lonely; by comfort and counsel and good cheer. O God, help us to make the Lord's Day a day of vision power; of communion with Thee, of Bethel experiences; a blessed holiday season of the soul. We pray Thee for the coming of Thy kingdom in all its fulness. May industry and commerce recognize the right of every man and woman and child to a day of rest, of recreation and culture of the soul. May labour and capital learn of Jesus and together take His blessed yoke and so find peace at last. We pray for Thy blessing, Father, in great plenitude and power. We need Thee every hour. Help Thou us that every day may be lived in the spirit of Him who liberated the Sabbath from unbearable traditions, and made it altogether beautiful and useful in His time. In His dear Name we pray. Amen.

II

THE LURE OF THE LORD'S DAY

"I was in the spirit on the Lord's Day."—*Revelation* 1: 10.

THE Sabbath, Sunday, or the Lord's Day? Which name should we use? Many people continue to use the term Sabbath despite the fact that the word is Jewish, not Christian; that it is antiquated and misleading. The Sabbath day was the seventh day, whereas the day we keep is the first day of the week. The Sabbath was an institution of the old Jewish order of things and the commandment to keep it holy was part of the law of Moses. All of the Ten Commandments save this one of keeping the Sabbath, are repeated after Jesus' death. Why should we continue to use the word Sabbath when the institution was abolished?

The name Sunday is, of course, of pagan origin, and derives its name from the worship of the sun; but Sunday is a name for the first day of the week. Two thousand years of Christianity have imparted a fragrance and a significance to the very word Sunday that is in every way remarkable. The word Sunday suggests to us not the sun—the lord of the day, but the Son of

Righteousness, who hath risen with healing in His wings, the Lord of the human heart.

The term Lord's Day was born of Christianity and baptized into its very spirit. Chrysostom, the eloquent preacher of the fourth century, said: "It was called the Lord's Day because the Lord arose from the dead on that day." Those who are familiar with the diary of Samuel Pepys, who flourished in the latter part of the seventeenth century, will recall that he invariably referred to the first day of the week as the "Lord's Day." Without pressing this minor matter overmuch, I believe that the use of the word Sabbath would better be discouraged; that Sunday is a more accurate term; and, that the Lord's Day has a beauty and a significance that merits a far more general use than the phrase now enjoys.

John wrote: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day," and that is the big thing. "In the Spirit!" Just what is meant by the phrase? Surely that preparation of mind and heart which apprehends divine truth, illumination, preparedness. In John's case there may have been special spiritual insight and ecstasy. But in a wider sense to be "in the Spirit" means that attitude of mind and affection toward God which is possible and desirable for all who would worship the Creator. We speak of worshipping in the Spirit and with the understanding, and we mean by this, coming to the services of the church with that inner pre-

paredness that lays hold of divine truth. In order to welcome this receptive attitude Mr. Gladstone was accustomed to walk the mile distance between Hawarden Castle and the church where he worshipped with such becoming humility and regularity. Moreover, he preferred to walk alone so as not to be disturbed by conversation. John was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day and now behold the blessed good that came to him through such preparedness of mind. He *heard* and he *saw*. All through the book of Revelation we have the two expressions over and over again, "*I saw*" and "*I heard*."

John was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and lo! his ears became marvellously attuned to the music of the heavenly host. He heard a great voice as of a trumpet; he heard a voice of many angels round about the throne; he heard a voice as of melodious thunder say, "Come." He heard a voice from heaven as the voice of many waters; yea, a voice which was as the voice of harpers harping with their harps. He heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow with them."

If one is in the Spirit on the Lord's Day his hearing will be marvellously acute. Is it not true that our spiritual hearing gets dull, and the finer sensibilities are easily chilled? The spiritual na-

ture scarcely gets a chance in our busy workaday life. About the only time that God's Spirit has a divine opportunity to reach the hearts of men is on the Lord's Day. Our ears are assailed all the week by harsh, yet necessary, sounds; the whirl of wheels, the babel of cries, the strident voice of trade, the confusion, the rush and roar of traffic, and the hearing of the soul becomes dulled and deadened by the commonplace. Is this the meaning of the lines of Father Ryan in "The Valley of Silence"?—

"Long ago I was weary of the voices
Whose music my heart could not win.
Long ago I was weary of noises
That fretted my soul with their din.
Long ago I was weary of places
Where I met but the human and sin."

In the last stanza the poet-priest tells us that the place of the Valley of Silence is between the Mountains of Prayer and Sorrow, and that God and His angels are there. Now the house of God is a house of prayer, and there sorrow is chastened and grief assuaged.

A favourite hymn with many congregations is:

"I heard the Voice of Jesus say,
'Come unto Me and rest.
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My breast.'"

But a great multitude have not heard the sweet accents of that Divine Voice and they have not

heard because of the stern call of bread and butter and the tyranny of industrial conditions, which, like war, "know no Sundays."

John was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and lo! to his eyes were given to behold very wonderful things. He saw a glorious being like unto the Son of Man. He saw a door opened in heaven. He saw the great white throne, and round about it the elders and the four living creatures. He saw angels and celestial glories, and finally comes the great vision whereof he wrote: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away, and the sea is no more."

Being in the Spirit on the Lord's Day is good for the spiritual eyesight. On Patmos John could see a long way off. He saw far beyond the borders of the rocky island to the Father's House. What good eyesight some of the Bible saints possessed. Daniel, six hundred miles from Jerusalem, saw from his open window the city of the great King. And John's vision was even more amazing, for he saw the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

And we sorely need the vision splendid. We are much like the man with the muck rake, who, having once found a coin amid the filth, spent the rest of his life bending over his rake, while just close above his head hung a golden crown.

In Dr. Henry van Dyke's sad, yet fascinating story of Spy Rock there is described the wonderful view one got from that lofty lookout. How the horizon widened and the vistas lengthened until it seemed to the Dreamer that he could look into the very lives of men and women. Now when one comes to be in the Spirit on the Lord's Day how great and far his vision; he can see things in proportion, he can get a true perspective of life, scales fall from his eyes, and, like Thomas, he is moved to exclaim: "My Lord and my God."

There are many hindrances in our times that make it especially difficult to be in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. The Lure of the Lord's Day in our age is the Sunday newspaper and Sunday amusements.

The harm of the Sunday newspaper lies in its great bulk and the ephemeral nature of much that it prints. The temptation to dawdle over fifty pages, the comic supplements and other features of the modern Sunday newspaper is too strong for thousands. My ideal of a Sunday newspaper, if there must be one at all, would be a news sheet solely, smaller even than the week-day editions. And if a man must wade through the fifty pages of the Sunday paper, let him postpone the reading till after morning worship.

One of the best family journals in America recently printed with editorial comment the following incident:

"A minister who was supplying a pulpit not his own was entertained in the home of one of the prominent members of the church. The family, straggling down to breakfast Sunday morning, brought with them the gossip acquired at various places on Saturday night. Two of them had been to the theatre, one had been to a party, most of them had been out late. More than one of the household began the day with a headache.

"On the breakfast table there were three Sunday newspapers. On these the different members of the family pounced, and were soon hidden behind them. Only the father and the mother went to church; the young people were 'too tired,' and did not care to dress.

"After the morning service the minister found the newspapers well shaken out and scattered. They covered not only the chairs and carpets; they covered the spiritual life of the family as well. After the Sunday dinner the papers were seized again.

"The home had a good library, but no member of the family opened a book that day. The library had the poems of Whittier, Lowell, Longfellow and Holmes, as well as those of Shakespeare and Tennyson, but no member of the family read one of them, much less any distinctly religious book.

"The hymn-book on the piano lay under a trashy song that came with one of the newspapers. The

family Bible on the centre-table was buried deep beneath the so-called 'comic-supplements.'

"The whole atmosphere of the home all day was commonplace, worldly and depressing. There was nothing that lifted the thoughts of the family above the wearisome round of the world and the things of the world.

"Without questioning the morality of such a Sunday, what may we not say of the pity of it? Is the soul of man so mean, so sordid, that not one hour or one day in the week can be saved for an acquaintance with the better things of literature and of life, and for the higher ministrations of the spirit?"

This incident and the comment thereupon furnishes food for much "sober second thought." The minister who can shovel his congregation out from the drifts of the modern Sunday newspaper is a pulpit Colonel Goethals, and his task in a way is as big as digging a Panama Canal.

Sunday theatres and Sunday moving pictures are a very great hindrance to the wise use of that day. For one thing, the people of the playhouses need the Lord's Day for their own spiritual welfare. Actors have souls as well as other folks, though some good people seem to doubt it. For another thing, the only opportunity for a host of young people to get their bearings and decide how large a place amusements shall have in their lives

six days of the week, is in some church on the Lord's Day. Crowd Sunday with commercialized amusements and the welfare of the young is gravely imperilled.

No really religious man wishes to make Sunday a day of blue laws; instead he wishes to make it an actual Lord's Day, with no other law than love and a joyful keeping of the day in the fine ministering spirit of Him who gave it birth.

And there are signs of the times that indicate a Christianizing of the social order. For example, take the action of the Poster Advertising Association of the United States and Canada in their series of posters of a religious and patriotic nature. At the Christmas season there appeared on the billboards of thirty-five hundred towns and cities of the United States and Canada a beautiful picture of the Nativity. The infant Christ was shown lying in the manger, the wondering shepherds kneeling hard by and underneath was the inscription: "Ask your Sunday School teacher to tell you the story." A more recent poster shows Jesus with the Children gathered around Him, illustrative of His saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me." And on the same poster is pictured a church and people, old and young, assembling for worship. Underneath this picture is the good advice: "Take your children to church. Give them the right start."

These beautiful and significant pictures cost the

Poster Advertising Association more than \$10,000, and their sole purpose is for the good of man. Surely there is reason to believe that at no far distant day a Christian adjustment of industrial and commercial life will decree a Saturday holiday the civilized world around, and commercialized amusements on the Lord's Day will pass away.

Rightfully kept and wisely used the Lord's Day will be invested with a lure toward God and the spiritual, instead of a lure toward mere pleasure and the material, and there shall come again somewhat of the high passion of the early Christians, who joyfully and eagerly assembled together on the first day of the week and were, O marvellous achievement, in the Spirit on the Lord's Day!

When the Lord's Day lures us Godward and infuses us with the spirit of the Risen Christ, then indeed it is the

"Day of all the week the best."

THE IMPERIAL CLAIMS OF CHRIST

PRAYER

Almighty God, we feel our unworthiness of the least of Thy mercies. We marvel because of Thy long suffering and Thy patience with us. For we have been heedless of Thy admonitions against sin, and we have scorned Thy gracious invitation to rest of soul and peace of mind. Our Father, we have dealt carelessly with Thy claims and acted as if it mattered little whether we considered Thee at all. Now we perceive the error of our ways and the cost of our indifference to Thee. Our wonderment grows that Thou didst not desert us forever after such flagrant rebellion on our part. We were unmindful of Thee but Thou forgettest us never. Surely Thou art a just and merciful Father, and there is none other like Thee. We bow before Thee now in penitence; we desire to hold nothing from Thee. Search Thou our hearts; our spirit of pride is broken utterly, and Thou alone canst heal our hurts. Let it be with us, Father, as it was before sin came between us. Blot out all remembrance of our departure from Thee. Help us to forget the things which are behind and to press forward to the things which are before. Grant that without excuse or subterfuge we shall follow Thy Son, our Saviour now, and follow Him always. We acknowledge no claim above Christ's, and with Him to prosper our souls in their growth toward Thee, at last Thou shalt become our all in all. In the Name of our Glorious Leader. Amen.

III

THE IMPERIAL CLAIMS OF CHRIST

“And as they went on the way, a certain man said unto Him, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head. And He said unto another, Follow me. But he said unto Him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But He said unto him, Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the Kingdom of God. And another also said, I will follow Thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house. But Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.”—*Luke 9: 57-62.*

THIS passage of Scripture is a most serious setting forth of the Imperial Claims of Jesus Christ upon His followers. This incident or series of incidents teaches us how candid our Saviour was, how free from subterfuge or evasion. Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. His Galilean ministry was ended and He had set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem. A great fear fell upon His disciples as they beheld Him hastening to his martyrdom. The shadow of impending crisis smote darkly upon the little group. To follow Jesus meant more than they had at first imagined. While the crowds were thronging the Master and His fresh, new teaching like sweet music fell from His lips, it was easy to be His follower.

But now, with that face set like flint toward the cross, everything seemed changed.

The little company was fearful and sorely troubled. It was at such a pivotal time as this that Jesus met three men who would be His disciples. What these men offered to do, or wanted to do, and Jesus' claim upon them is a study full of profit. Indeed, the men are representatives of three distinct types of character: the impulsive or impetuous; the shy and diffident; and the irresolute and vacillating. Or, we may think of them as typifying three temperaments—the sanguine, the phlegmatic and the melancholic.

The first would-be disciple was the impetuous, emotional, sanguine kind. He comes forth full of optimism, and with a flourish. "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest," he exclaimed. On the surface this is fine. Precisely this is just the sort of followers not only Jesus, but every other great leader, has. Most desired and the sort hardest to get.

Observe there is no reservation, no withholding of anything apparently. It was voluntary too. Evidently the man had not counted the cost. Verily it seems he knew not what he said. Jesus answers him coldly, critically. His answer has in it the sharpness of icy wind. It cuts and wounds, so sharp is it. "The foxes have holes, and the birds have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head."

As much as to say, "Now will you come? Are you willing now to say, 'I will follow whithersoever Thou goest'?" There is in this a suggestion of Garibaldi's reply to his would-be followers; or rather, there is in Garibaldi's words a suggestion of those of Jesus:

"Soldiers," said that great captain, "soldiers! What I have to offer you is fatigue, danger, struggle and death; the chill of the cold night in the open air, and heat under the burning sun; no lodges, no munitions, no provisions, but forced marches, dangerous watch-posts, and the continual struggle with the bayonet against batteries. Those who love freedom and their country, follow me."

The ambitious request of the mother of James and John, and Jesus' reply as recorded in Matthew 20:20-28 and Mark 10:35-45, touches also the same principle involved in this verse.

The parable in Luke 14:28-30, of the man who started in to build a tower and could not finish it because he failed to count the cost, is also illustrative of this point.

Not a few of us mistake sudden enthusiasm or emotion for deep convictions. Every big revival sweeps in thousands of just such impetuous ones, who drop back to the old way and out of the new after a few months. But, let no one be discouraged. Peter was impetuous, impulsive, vacillating, mercurial, but under the tutelage of Jesus Christ

he gave himself at last with complete abandon to His Imperial Claims and influenced millions for good.

The second would-be disciple is the shy and diffident type, and of the phlegmatic temperament. To him Jesus says, "Follow Me." Jesus must have seen in him the stuff of which heroes are made. But the man said, "Lord, suffer me first to bury my father."

The answer is worth thoughtful consideration. Either the man meant that his father was dead and that he wanted permission to wait till after the funeral; or, the answer may be a sort of proverbial expression, meaning that household cares are in the way of the discipleship of Jesus; that after the father is dead and buried and all the family duties discharged, then the claims of Jesus may be considered. In either case the lesson Jesus wished to convey is obvious. His claims are above all others. First things first, is His mandate. Jesus asks for the first place in the affections of His followers, and if that be accorded Him it may confidently be expected that every other duty will be discharged with greater devotion than before.

There are times when as between love of family ties and duty to some great truth we are compelled to choose between the two, and for the latter. In thousands of homes in war's purgatorial times the country's call was put above that of

home. Abraham Lincoln's letter to Mrs. Bixby is a glowing tribute to such a spirit of sacrifice, and this fine sentence from that letter is worth remembering:

"I pray that our heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom."

The phrase "Leave the dead to bury their own dead" deserves some further examination. Let those who have no spiritual life discharge those duties where no spiritual power or equipment is needed, if there are such circumstances. Is this the meaning? Very likely. A man ought to make his life count for the most, ought to live it on the highest level possible. And, wherever a man is, if by staying there he can make his life count for more by spiritual service in that place than in some other place, then it is his duty to stay there.

As to whether a man, when he comes into conscious relationship with God through Christ, shall leave the work he is in for some other depends entirely on the man and his work. One man whom Jesus cured wanted to follow Him and Jesus sent him home. Here is a man who wanted to go home and Jesus commanded him to follow on.

The third man is the irresolute, vacillating sort, and of the temperament melancholy. "I will fol-

low Thee, Lord," he exclaims, "but suffer me first to bid farewell to them that are at my house."

This seems to be a reasonable request. Under similar circumstances Elijah granted it to Elisha. It all depends. Circumstances do alter cases. I suppose Jesus saw it would not do in this case. Very likely he saw clearly the man's irresolute spirit. Once let him go home and a score of hindrances would be put in his way. No, if he was going to spread abroad the Kingdom, let him start now. Burn all bridges behind him. If he went back it would be forever. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God."

The figure is significant, even eloquent. A modern farmer with a riding plough, drawn by two or three strong horses, might look back occasionally without much damage. A farmer of the "fifties," ploughing with a mule and an old-fashioned single-shovel plough, would find it a more difficult undertaking. But, get before you the picture of the Oriental ploughman of Jesus' day, holding on with one hand to the single hilt, and a ploughshare just touching the surface of the earth, with his other hand supplying the goad to a lazy ox, and you will get the full force of this figure.

Jesus claims the best we have and all we have. Anything short of this is not enough. And, having started, we cannot look back, for if we do, within a little while we shall be going back. Re-

member Demas. Remember Lot's wife. Oh, the glory of going on! Think of Paul, of Savonarola, of Luther and Wesley, of Phillips, Lovejoy and of Frances Willard! Oh, the long list in state and church and school who marched straight onward to martyrdom and glory. Had they no temptations to go back? The world knows of their victories only; God alone knows of their struggles and storms.

When a mere boy, I witnessed once a spectacle that I shall remember to my dying day. I was standing on the porch of my grandfather's home during the progress of a summer thunderstorm. The late afternoon sun was hid behind clouds of inky darkness, the repeated flashes of lightning illuminated the heavens at times most wondrously; and all the while the thunder rolled and reverberated like mighty batteries of artillery. As I stood there I saw a pigeon caught by the angry winds on its belated homeward journey. The east wind drove it toward the west, the west wind battled it back toward the east, and then forming a vortex they whirled the bewildered bird round and round. I said to myself, "The bird will surely be dashed to earth." But all the time it was beating the air with its wings and struggling hard against the adverse elements. And as I watched with bated breath that pigeon's struggles with the storm I saw it was rising higher all the time. Slowly, and with wearied wings, it mounted higher,

and still higher, until it got above the warring winds, and pausing for a moment, as if to get its bearings, flew straight off toward its home.

In later years as I came to know something of life with its vicissitudes and varied experiences I have said how like that bird is man, beaten hither and thither and down by storms of doubt, temptation and sorrow, yet through leadership with Christ as the revealer of the great, tender Father love of God, rising to the serene realm of trust and hope, and thus having gotten his bearings, setting steadfastly out again along the way of the cross, which leads home.

Oh! the glory of going on when Jesus Christ goes before!

THE UNCONCEALABLE CHRIST

PRAYER

Blessed God, Thou canst not be hid. Neither clouds nor thick darkness, not even death can conceal Thee from Thy believing children. We mark Thy presence in the world to-day none the less than when Thou didst appear in the burning bush, the Exodus, and the majestic spectacle of Mount Sinai from which came Moses with his face aglow with God. We trace Thy steps as surely now as the multitudes did the beneficent path of Thy Son through Perea, Galilee and Judea. We behold now Thy power blessing the broken of heart and striking off the bonds of oppression according as Thy children do Thy will on earth as it is done in Heaven. Most blessed of all, by faith we have beheld Thee and our ears have heard Thy speech. Make us to know Thou needest us to build a new heaven and a new earth. Illumine our slow and stupid minds to see how necessary Thy children are to carry out Thy plans. Help us to be Thy fellow workers to bring all humanity to know Thee as Jesus knew and revealed Thee. Cleanse us in mind and purify our affections; fill us with a double portion of Thy spirit that through us a multitude may come to know Thee in all Thy saving fulness. Then shall we be glad and our hire will be the joy of souls redeemed from sin and calling Thee Father. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

IV

THE UNCONCEALABLE CHRIST

“He could not be hid.”—*Mark 7: 24.*

THE very stars in their courses fight for some souls. Against the heaviest of odds they surmount every obstacle, break down every barrier, and from the profoundest obscurity are literally thrust out into the fierce light that breaks upon a world character. History bears sturdy witness to this strange fact time and time again. Lincoln's life is America's classic and Garfield's career is notable of this kind, but the most extraordinary example of all times is Jesus of Nazareth. Humanly speaking, none was so little favoured by environment for the stupendous tasks He essayed as the young carpenter of Joseph's shop.

The country of Jesus' birth was despised and rejected by the great of that age. The noble Roman and the proud Greek were blissfully ignorant of Jesus' country, and it was the last place to which they would have looked for a world leader.

The very town that sheltered Him for thirty years was held in such low estimate by the Palestinians themselves as to give rise to the proverb: “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?”

But "He could not be hid."

The Scribes and the Pharisees, the chief religionists of Jesus' day, sought diligently to drive Him into obscurity and keep Him there. They tried to confound Him in His talk, to catch and confuse Him in His speech, to discredit Him and drive away His disciples. But "He could not be hid."

Jesus' family tried to conceal Him, and the story of their unfaith in Him is one of the most pathetic in the Gospels. They threw obstacles in His way, they sought to embarrass Him and urged Him to go back to Nazareth and the carpenter shop of Joseph, but "He could not be hid."

Jesus tried to hide Himself. Oftener than not He shunned publicity. Once when weary in, though not of, his work He said to His disciples, "Let us go apart into a desert place and rest awhile." So they departed in a boat for the other side of the lake, but the multitudes set out on foot and when the boat landed there the people were clamouring for Jesus' ministrations, and He healed and blest and taught. In the Scripture from which the text is taken, Jesus went into a house on the coast of Tyre and Sidon, and would have no man know where He was. But it was useless. He could not be hid. A needy woman came asking a boon for her afflicted daughter, and the little daughter was cured. Jesus could not be hid.

At last it seemed that the enemy had triumphed.

They nailed Him to the cross beam, the hour of their triumph surely had come. They wagged their heads and scoffed on Him hanging helpless there. He cried: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and dying between two robbers, was laid away in Joseph of Arimathæa's tomb. Pilate appointed soldiers to stand guard and watch it, when lo! "Up from the grave He arose and triumphed o'er His foes." He simply "could not be hid."

Why was it Jesus could not be hid? Can you hide Mount Everest? Can you cover up Pike's Peak? Can you conceal Mont Blanc? Permanently, I mean. Nature can and does cover them with clouds and shroud them in mists, but the great heaven-kissing, hoar mounts are still there, and when the glory of the sun strikes them in all its fiery fulness, behold those sentinels of God's majestic in their grandeur!

Can you hide the Mississippi River, or suppress Lake Superior? Can you conceal Chicago or cover up New York City? Can you put Shakespeare in a sepulchre or bury the Bible?

If you can succeed in hiding these vast mountains, in concealing these mighty water courses, in covering up these great cities, in burying these supreme writings, perhaps you might begin to attempt to conceal Christ.

"He could not be hid." Why could He not be hid? Well, for one thing, because of His good-

ness. "He went about doing good." The world will beat a path to the door of any man or woman who can heal humanity's hurts, assuage grief, or bind up the broken-hearted. Jesus' way was a way of glory because it was paved with benevolences and bordered with deeds of kindness. Mothers brought their precious children to Him that He might take them in His arms and bless them. The blind, the deaf, the dumb, the lame and the sin-smitten thronged Him because in His presence were sight and hearing and speech and wholeness and forgiveness.

"He could not be hid." He entered Peter's house and fever fled from the woman who had been burning up with its blight. He met the funeral cortège of the widow of Nain's son and converted it into a procession of joy. He gave Lazarus back to Martha and Mary, and the gloom that had hung heavy in that house was driven out by the joy that Jesus brought in. To catalogue Jesus' deeds of goodness is to bind together sheaves of blessings; to recount His ministries is to gather a cluster of fragrant flowers of mercies.

Imagine this same good and merciful One in our city to-day doing for our homes and our loved ones just what He did in Galilee, Perea and Judea, nineteen hundred years ago. Think you He could be hid? Impossible! People would throng the house He entered, people would stand

all night in our streets to touch the hem of His garment, to look on His face or hear the sound of His voice.

Another reason why Jesus could not be hid was because of His teachings. He came with a new emphasis, a new viewpoint, a fresh and wonderfully wholesome teaching of God. To Jesus, God was so near and all men and women were His children. He radiated the abundant life, and living actually seemed "sublime" as those who heard Him glimpsed life as He saw it, "steadily and whole."

Great teachers are scarce, and when one rises he cannot be hid. It was said of Frederick W. Robertson that when people came to him with their difficulties and doubts he would sit down with them and say: "Now you see it is this way——" and then he would make the matter so plain and simple that the troubled ones wondered how it came that they ever doubted at all.

Such a teacher could not be hid. Walls of prejudice could not conceal him, nor campaigns of opposition drive him into hiding. Critics called Jesus "insane," "fanatic," and "impostor," but they could not put a bushel measure over the Light of the World. He spoke with the authority of Truth and what He taught He was. Therefore, He could not be hid.

Jesus cannot be hid now. His spirit in the lives of His followers of to-day cannot be concealed.

The witness of the New Testament to the Unconcealable Christ is very wonderfully corroborated by the witness of subsequent history. Christianity has gone on its triumphant way because "He could not be hid." Had it been otherwise, the faith would have perished long ago.

In the considerations of this text my mind has dwelt much on three men, who, during my ministry here, have gone home from this congregation to be with God. Christ was in them and He could not be hid. The first of the three to go was one of the two men who met me at the train and welcomed me to Bloomington. This man could not be hid. He lived and wrought here for half a century, and to mention his name is but to evoke eulogies of his worth as a citizen and a neighbour. He influenced the financial life of our city, but never lost himself in the baneful lust for wealth. Ten years before his death he left off saving money and gave away practically all his earnings for deserving causes. He reared in Christian teaching a family of useful men and women, who rise up to call his name blessed. He loved the church of God, and for fifty years was faithful to all its services. His last Sunday morning on earth was spent, as was his custom, in this place, and from here he went home, not to die, but to live. He could not be hid.

The second was a tradesman of humble and simple life, of the mind of Jesus Christ. He loved

God and man. For forty years he was an elder in this church and sexton of this house of God. He was a doorkeeper in the House of God, and to him that was honour enough. Poor in this world's goods, he was princely in his benefactions. Day after day this man journeyed to and from the church to his modest home on East Taylor Street. He travelled little and read not widely but well. His thoughts and ministrations were wide as the world, and his gifts helped to preach the Gospel in nearly every land. He could not be hid. His name was known to hundreds because his life was associated so closely with Christ's church and Christ's spirit was in him in plenitude of power. Like Enoch, "he walked with God." He could not be hid.

The third was a man whose life was very different, yet much like the two of whom I have spoken. This man was a member of the City Fire Department, and he could not be hid. He loved the church, and the Lord's Day was to him the "day of all the week the best." This man was fidelity personified. Many with whom he associated were irreligious men and scoffers at the church, but not of him. Because of him these irreligious men came to think better of God, of the Bible and of sobriety. This man taught a group of boys in the Bible School and influenced their lives for good. He could not be hid. He loved to do good and he spake no ill of any man,

and when he died it was with a smile upon his lips and in a trust that was beautiful to see and feel. Christ was in these three men and He could not be hid. And to-day, their pastor feels the presence of God and a strength from above because of these three followers of the Christ who could not be hid.

A few years ago I stood by a grave in beautiful Greenwood Cemetery. On the plain stone I read the name, "Henry Ward Beecher," and the years of his birth and death. I stood wrapped in thought of the great preacher's ministry, for I had but come from Old Plymouth, and the spell of the personality that still broods over that historic church was upon me and held me fast.

With the memory of that day in Greenwood I like much to couple a remark of Beecher's made not long before his death to a very dear friend; he said, "I suppose they will be taking me to Greenwood some of these days, but—" and the great eyes sparkled and the mobile lips were wreathed in smiles—"I won't stay there!"

Nay, verily, he could not be hid. Greenwood holds only the dear dust and his spirit fills the universe. Is Jesus dead? Is Luther dead? Is John Wesley dead? Is Henry Drummond dead? Is Julia Ward Howe dead? Is any Jesus-like man or woman who ever lived dead? No, a thousand times no! They live and love on forever, both in minds made better by their presence and with the

vast company on the hinter side of the grave who could not be, and cannot be, hid.

Thank God for the Unconcealable Christ.

“Thou shalt know Him when He comes
Not by any din of drums,
Not the vantage of His airs,
Neither by His crown
Nor His gown,
Nor by anything He wears.”

But thou *shalt* know Him, for He cannot be hid.

THE SONG OF SPRING

PRAYER

God of the fragrant fields and vocal woods, we praise Thee for manifold beauties of Thy great out-of-doors. With the Psalmist we are moved to exclaim: "Sing praises unto our God who covereth the heavens with clouds, who prepareth the rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains." We praise and thank Thee for the return of the springtime with beauty of flowers, and singing birds, and leafing trees. Do Thou help us to see what Jesus saw, in Thy care for bird and flower—a lesson of Thy love and care for all Thy children. By the many tokens of new and expanding life all about us may we desire the more to be re-created in the likeness of Jesus Christ, and grow in grace and knowledge of Him. May the vision of beauty now in field and forest soften our hardness of heart, and assuage our sometime harshness of speech. Teach us, Father, by the love and gentleness of Jesus, to be kind to all Thy creatures. May we not heedlessly take the life of bird or beast; may we come to have the mind of Thy Son so fully that consideration for the weak and helpless will temper our actions always. O help us to possess His mind so fully that all wintriness of malice and pride, and all worldliness shall be driven from our lives, and in their place the eternal spring of love abide. In the Name of the Great Teacher. Amen.

IV

THE SONG OF SPRING

"For, lo, the winter is past;
The rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of the singing of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land;
The fig-tree ripeneth her green figs,
And the vines are in blossom;
They give forth their fragrance."

Song of Solomon 2: 11, 12, 13.

THE presence of the Song of Solomon in the canon of Holy Scripture has long been a puzzle to devout students of the Word. The older type of theologian interpreted this book allegorically. The Song was explained as an allegory of the love between Christ and His church. But there are few scholars to-day who hold to the allegorical interpretation of Solomon's Song. The Song is accepted quite literally as a poem of human love.

In the compass of a few sentences, the more reasonable view is that the Song of Solomon is a tribute to the pure and strong love of a little rustic maiden whom the king had seen in the course of his travels and greatly admired. He sought to win the maiden's love and make her a member of his royal household. But her heart was not her own to give, she had already given

it to a simple-minded rural lad, and to him she was true as steel. Not all the magnificence of Solomon's court could move her. Hence, this tribute to fidelity, to love as strong as death.

If it be questioned why a book of this nature is in the Bible, the answer is not difficult. The story of such constancy as this, in such an age and amid such temptation, is a needed lesson for every age. The love of which the poem sings so triumphantly is pure, worthy and honourable. The imagery in places is too sensuous for our tastes, and we should bear in mind as we read it that it was written by an Oriental for Orientals.

As poetry the book is of a high order, ranking in striking imagery and strong figure next to the book of Job. It is from this Song of Songs that the beautiful and oft-quoted verse is taken, "Until the day break and the shadows flee away." And also the fine phrases, "Rose of Sharon," "Lily of the Valley," "The chiefest among ten thousand." And in the midst of this gorgeous love poem occurs this charming passage of Scripture descriptive of springtime's coming, a veritable Song of Spring:

"For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear upon the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come; and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land; the fig-tree ripeneth her green figs and the vines are in blossom, they give forth their fragrance."

Could anything of the kind be more perfect? Old Winter, with his frosty breath, his ice and

snow and bluster, has gone away. Spring with "incense breathing morn" bringing flowers and singing birds, and carpeting the earth with the softest of velvet green, has come.

The time has come to go out of doors with God. The miracle of the resurrection is true, and bush and bud is making its annual advent. Go out of doors with God and let Him speak the multi-tongued language of Nature to your heart of hearts.

"The flowers appear on the earth." Everywhere they come,—out in the woods, along the wayside, in dooryard and in meadow and orchard, the flowers appear. And "trailing clouds of glory do they come from God who is their home." Lilacs and tulips, hyacinths, jonquils, lilies, roses; they come! they come! What a ministry, what a varied ministry there is in flowers.

At the wedding the bride carries them, and the house is heavy with their fragrance. At the party they are entwined and clustered in profusion. They brighten and refreshen the dinner-table, and they come with blessed ministry to the sick. And, when death comes, flowers convey our sympathy and sorrow, and with their beauty and perfume they help to assuage our grief. It is a calloused soul that cannot be reached by flowers.

I recall once hearing Mark Guy Pearce tell of his work in behalf of the submerged tenth in the East End of London. Some of his fellow-workers

took great clusters of roses from Devonshire down with them into the congested district, and it was their roses that brought vividly to the mind of some living in shame the homes they knew in the country as innocent children, and by such means they were drawn away from the sin-smitten districts to a fresh start in life. How true it is that the sight, or even the perfume, of certain flowers will stir up the memories of our childhood. The fragrance of white lilacs or the sight of bluebells carries me swiftly back to the country home of my boyhood.

It is a good thing for the soul of man for him to go out of doors with God and mingle with His flowers. It was out of such close communion with bud and blossom that Wordsworth was enabled to write the exquisite lines :

“To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.”

Jesus loved the flowers. “Consider the lilies,” was His advice. Study them, learn from them, especially their growth. Ponder their very great beauty; not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like a lily. Has God no message for you in the flowers? Do they not speak of purity, of beauty, of ministry, of growth?

“Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,

I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but *if* I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is."

"The Time of the Singing of Birds is Come."

Thank God for the coming of the singing birds. To be sure, a few of the birds stay with us all the year round, but they are not *singing* birds. Snowbirds, juncos, chickadees,—a bluejay here and there—these we may glimpse throughout some of the bleak months perhaps, but no music do they make. Now the prima donnas of the woods and fields return: the robin, the bluebird, the song sparrow, the meadow lark, the rose-breasted grosbeak,—they are coming back, and already some of them are now here.

Did you ever try to imagine what the country would be like without a single bird? Fancy the meadows without a bird note, the woods silent as death, the orchards voiceless and the dooryards unvisited by a single songster. Go out and study the birds with God. Not with a gun, for if you do you cannot have Christ for companion. Go out to watch the birds and listen to their songs. Go out to learn from "the birds of the heaven."

There are many sermons the birds can preach to us. Industry, for instance. What homemakers they are. How they toil building their nests. I have watched a robin make by actual count twenty-four visits to a pile of dried grass, selecting

with much care long stems and flying with one at a time in her bill to the tree where the nest was in process of construction. I recall watching with deep interest a few years ago a pair of blue-jays teaching a lusty young jay to fly. The little fellow was awkward and once he tumbled off a low limb and did a great deal of fussing over the matter. The thing was so amusing that I laughed out loud, when, as if in resentment, the mother bird, uttering harsh cries of anger and alarm, flew close by my head, and either accidentally or purposely, struck me as she passed, as much as to say, "See here, you mind your own business. I know how to raise baby birds. You go along about your affairs." And I did.

In Kentucky I have listened enraptured to the mocking-bird's song, that "slim Shakespeare" of the bird world. And with that entrancing harmony in my ears I have thought surely no other bird will venture to sing while such melody fills the air. But while listening to that sweet song I have detected the harsh, discordant note of the bluejay, the petulant chirp of an English sparrow, and the raucous croak of a yellow-billed cuckoo. The lesson has remained with me to this day. We ordinary folks are prone to withhold our little when the talented persons are offering their much. Soul of mine, take thou to thyself this lesson from the singing birds: sing on, even though thy song be lowly.

Jesus loved the birds. "Behold," he said, "the birds of the heavens, that they sow not, nor gather into barns, and your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not of much more value than they?" Jesus saw in the life of the birds an illustration of God's care for us.

Every year, moved by that mysterious impulse, the birds migrate in countless thousands from the south to the north, and then from the north back again south. I am not forgetting the disasters of storm and cold that sometimes overtake and slay these migrants, but speaking by and large, at the end of their journey there is always that climatic condition which they seek. If God is with the birds, why not with you? If He cares for them will He not care for you, who are made in His own likeness?

For four consecutive springs a male rose-breasted grosbeak has visited the trees around our home and remained a week in the neighbourhood before resuming his journey north. Very early in May he arrives; usually the fourth or fifth day I hear on awakening in the morning his flute-like notes, and I know my rose-breasted friend has come. This experience has given me a new appreciation of Bryant's lines:

"He who from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright."

"The green tree ripeneth her green figs, and the vines are in blossom." Growth is everywhere. Apple trees are in bloom and their fragrance is finer than attar of roses. I think it was Henry Ward Beecher who said that "an apple tree puts to shame all the men and women who have attempted to dress since the world began." Get out in some orchard with God these days. Behold the glories, and drink in the fragrance. It is lovely beyond comparison. Fruit trees yield rich lessons for character building by striking analogies. Take the matter of grafting. I do not profess to know much about it, but this I do know—a wild plum or apple tree is cut down to a certain height, a V-shaped incision is made, and a like-shaped piece is cut out of the cultivated apple or plum tree, inserted in the opening and bound round with clay. And soon the miracle begins, the juices of the stock pass through the inserted piece and are transformed into its nature. Is it not on this wise that we grow toward God? Christ is the new graft into the old stock of humanity. As our poor lives pass through His great, strong spirit, they begin to take on great riches, for they have been grafted upon the Infinite.

Go out of doors with God. Behold everything beautiful in its time. Learn from flower and bird and blossom. In God's great out-of-doors in the spring o' the year it is difficult not to think God's thoughts after Him. I do not offer this open air

worship, however, as a substitute for attendance in the House of God. As a rule, a man who never meets God in worship in His church does not see Him in flower or tree or bird or blossom. There are exceptions, but that is just what they are—exceptions. To those who worship God reverently in His house, earth with her thousand voices speaks of Him. And the time will come to him who worships only in the open field and forest, or on wide expanse of old ocean, when his soul will cry out for a knowledge of God larger and deeper than birds, or blossoms, or trees can give. The soul will cry, "Show us the Father," and only Christ can answer that cry.

The return of spring is to Nature a new creation and this too is what Christianity, if it be anything, must be to the soul. And as the icy winds of old winter, the snows and bleak bitter days are all but forgotten in the enjoyment of spring flowers and songs of birds, so ought it to be with these lives of ours. We have known our winter experiences, the snows and bitter winds of grief and trials have frozen the genial currents of our souls, but the spring of Christian hope is here. It is springtime in our souls. The sunshine of God's great love bathes us and the flowers of His remembrance shed fragrance in our hearts.

"When I am gone, somehow I hope that spring
Will typify my life, my optimism,
My hope of victory, through the years,

My nerve of step, my clear and visioned eye.
The early flowers, the robins singing in
The rain (may they not sing since they have wings?),
The increasing light, the slowly opening buds,
The almond blooms, the trees in vernal dress
Are like the silver crown upon my head;
Yes, when I die, it shall be springtime then
Of my great immortality.

"When I am gone, let men say: 'He was always young;
Not even sorrow, with his ruthless plough;
Nor base ingratitude, nor brothers false,
Nor slander's venomous tooth, nor poverty,
Could rend rude furrows in his springlike soul
That soon arrayed itself with lovely vines
And fragrant flowers that added beauties new
To one who, ripe in years, knew not old age.'"

THE EMPTY PEW

PRAYER

Our Father, by the holy memories of Thy house, the dear old hymns, the fervent prayers, the blessed fellowship, we pray Thee to forgive our neglect, our indifference, and our empty seat in the House of God. We marvel how we ever found it in our hearts to stay away from Thy house on the Lord's Day. Like Jacob we have forgotten our vows; we want to renew them now and this our Bethel be. We crave Thy forgiveness and beseech Thee in the renewal of our covenant to suffer us to know that we may become again to Thee just what we were before we forgot our first Love. We have tried to find peace and pleasure in places elsewhere than Thy House, and we confess our disappointment and soul despondency. We return now to Thy courts saying with Thy servant of the long ago: "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the House of my God than to dwell in the tents of the wicked." Our Father, fill us full of Thy own spirit. Help us to seek the mind of Thy Son, our Master, who entered as was His custom into the synagogue on the great day of rest and praise. Make us to know Thou dost miss us, Father, when we are absent from Thy sanctuary. Quicken our sense of obligation to others when tempted to stay away from worship. Stir us up to feel the pang of pain our indifference has cost the pastor whom Thou hast given us. Heal us, our Father, wherein sin has broken us, and putting on the garments of praise and fellowship in Thy House, guide Thou our weary feet to find again those altar stairs that slope through darkness up to God. In the Name of Jesus Christ, we ask Thee to hear us. Amen.

VI

THE EMPTY PEW

"Then Jonathan said to David, To-morrow is the new moon and thou shalt be missed because thy seat will be empty."—*I Samuel* 20: 18.

THE story of David and Jonathan is incomparable in its beauty. To read it is like listening to the chime of old monastery bells. The friendship of these two young men, one from the field and the flock, the other from the king's family and the battle camp, was strong and sure as death itself. The two were bound together as by hoops of steel, or, as the quaint Biblical phrase has it, "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David." These two young men loved each other, and loved despite the fact that such affection on Jonathan's part meant the loss of the throne, and on David's, perhaps, his very life.

The twentieth chapter of First Samuel describes the covenant these two friends made in the face of peril and impending disaster. David was to absent himself three days from the king's table and if Saul was not displeased they would understand that they had nothing to fear from his wrath, but if otherwise, then David would know

that his life was in danger. It was with reference to this ruse that Jonathan said, "To-morrow is the new moon, and thou shalt be missed because thy seat will be empty."

This is an ideal text for a memorial sermon. The very words stir up our minds by way of remembrance. "Thou shalt be missed because thy seat shall be empty." Instinctively we think of empty chairs in the home, in the church and in the business and social circles. Chairs that are empty because of death, pews that are empty because of removal and vicissitude. Oh, the pangs of separations in this life. Thanks be unto God that we cherish a lively hope of a time and a realm where there will be no sadness of farewell, no moaning of the bar,

"But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound or foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home."

But it is not such a use of Jonathan's words that I propose making now. I want instead to use these words in a parabolic sense. These words refer to the friendship between David and Jonathan, and the strong power that sought to break that tender bond. I want now to apply them to that friendship with Jesus which the believer enters upon when he becomes a Christian, and the strong power of evil that seeks to sever that best of bonds.

To all members of the household of faith, all

communicants of Christ's church who remain away from the House of God through indifference or neglect, these words apply with pathetic aptness: "Thou shalt be missed because thy seat will be empty."

"Missed?" I fancy some will say. "Who will miss me? I am quite lost in a congregation, I do not count for much. Nobody will miss me." Yes, but you will be missed, many will miss you.

And first of all, *you will be missed by the minister*. Let no one imagine an empty pew escapes the minister's eye. A minister soon comes to know his congregation as a captain knows his ship, as a mother knows her babe, and when there is absence without cause, none is so sensitively aware of that fact as is he. In the larger churches as well as in the smaller ones, when the minister goes into the pulpit he can in a single sweeping survey mark either the presence or absence of habitual attendants or faithful worshippers. It is quite wonderful the influence that a congregation exerts upon the minister. While it is true "like priest like people," it is even truer "like people like priest." Strangers may be present in large numbers, but the heart of a true pastor will miss his own and yearn for their presence.

O faithful followers of the Christ, you who never absent yourselves from the House of God wilfully or remain away from services on the Lord's Day save when you have reasons you can

give to Him, you are strength and sweetness and light to your minister. Even in his dreams of his congregation he beholds you in your accustomed places, and in visions of the night you edify and equip him for his shepherd task and his prophetic office!

An empty seat in the House of God has its message. Sometimes it signifies absorption in business or pleasure; often wilful neglect; frequently a waning sense of sin. Occasionally an empty pew means a real or fancied grievance against a fellow member of the church. And this, despite the prayer repeated every Lord's Day morning in unison wherein occurs the petition "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

In the course of a year's ministry the preacher's themes must necessarily extend over a wide area and deal with many aspects of Christian life and doctrine. The regular churchgoer will reap the benefit of this variety, but the occasional or indifferent worshipper may not be present at the service of all others when the sermon would have helped him the most. I fancy many a minister has experienced poignant regret because of the absence of certain of his members from the very service when the sermon was of just such a nature as would have found and fed them. At such seasons the minister has said to himself in deep disappointment, "How I wish a certain man were out to-day; that hymn is his favourite, and the sermon-

theme is such as he especially enjoys. Oh, I wish he were here, for I know his faith would have been strengthened and his flagging spirit revived."

"Thou shalt be missed because thy seat will be empty." You will be missed sorely by the minister, who looked for your coming up to the very moment of the morning sermon and recalled your absence Sunday night as he reviewed in retrospect the services of the day.

Not only will you be missed by the minister, *but you will also be missed by the members of the church.* Your empty pew will be conspicuous. Your absence will not escape the watchful eyes of those who with you are members of the body of Christ.

It was Dr. Arthur T. Pierson, I think, who described the Scriptural marks of a church as four, and as follows: (1), An Assembly for Worship; (2), An Organized Body for Aggressive Work for Christ; (3), A School for Training Disciples, and (4), A Home for the Family of God. This latter aspect of a church's life is both beautiful and fruitful. It is good to think often of your church as a home and of the membership as a family. Your brothers and sisters in the Lord will miss you from the service, and especially as they gather about His table and partake of the loaf and the fruit of the vine.

The influence of your absence from the House of God without cause will make it easier for some

fellow-member to stay away, and perhaps one who needs the service even more than you do.

I know of a lad whose father was urging him to remain after Sunday school for the church services and whose conscience was severely hurt when the lad replied: "But, father, you don't attend morning service more than half the Sundays yourself."

I know of a man of very large business affairs, who attends church regularly both morning and evening. Some one remarked to him how unusual it was in this day for business men to go to church twice on Sunday. "Well," was the reply, "I attend morning worship for my own good and I go to church at night for the sake of others. In the morning I commune, at night I enjoy the service, but I am present principally that I may meet and greet the young people."

Picture to yourself the impression of the value of church attendance which many a young man and woman received through the example of that princely business man.

Yes, your fellow-members will miss you. You cannot remain away from God's house through indifference without that fact being known sooner or later to the other members of the Household of Faith. On the other hand, your regular attendance, your fidelity, your interest in Christianity will be the means of helping others and

perhaps of saving them to and for the priceless things of our Holy Faith.

“Thou shalt be missed because thy seat will be empty.”

Not only will you be missed by the minister and missed by the members of the church, *but you will be missed by the Master*. Does it make any difference to the Heavenly Father whether you are in His house or not? Does God care? For answer turn to the teachings of His Son as recorded in John, the tenth chapter. There Jesus tells of the Shepherd's intimate knowledge of His sheep, how that He calls them each by name and they hear His voice. In the fourteenth verse Jesus says, “I am the Good Shepherd and I know My own.”

That is a beautiful figure and one very full of comfort. An incident of the resurrection is equally comforting: when the women came with spices to the grave of Jesus, they found an empty tomb and a young man in a white robe, who said to them, “Be not amazed. Ye seek Jesus the Nazarene, who hath been crucified. He is risen, He is not here. Behold the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter.”

“*And Peter.*” How significant the definite name, the individual message—“Go tell His disciples *and Peter.*”

In the Potter's field of New York, where sleep 180,000 men and women, who died unknown or friendless, in that great city there is one monu-

ment for all the dead, and it bears this ineffably tender inscription: "He calleth His own by name."

Yes, the Master will miss you. He missed Thomas from that prayer meeting the disciples were holding in a room in Jerusalem. Thomas was absent the first time Jesus joined His disciples after His resurrection, but eight days later Thomas was with the others when Jesus came. And the Master first blessed all the eleven, saying, "Peace be unto you." Then He turned to Thomas and said, "Reach hither thy finger, and see my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." And Thomas' doubt gave way to faith and he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God."

The Good Shepherd misses His sheep. The prodigal son's father missed the younger son and yearned for his return. The God who counts the stars also heals the human heart. To believe this, to shape one's life by such a faith, is exceeding great gain.

Dr. A. J. Gordon, the eminent Baptist minister, came into the flood-tide of his power by recognition of the perennial presence of the Christ. It all came about through a dream. He thought he was in his pulpit and preaching to his people—the kind of a dream that ministers often experience. Out in the audience he marked the presence of a stranger, and thought to himself, "I will see that

man after service; something in his face attracts me." But the sermon engrossed his attention and not till the service was over and the congregation dismissed did he think of the stranger again. Hurriedly Dr. Gordon sought him out, but the man had left the building. Recalling the person next to whom the stranger had sat, Dr. Gordon found him and asked who the stranger was. "Why, don't you know?" was the prompt reply. Dr. Gordon said he did not. "It was Jesus of Nazareth," answered the man. Dr. Gordon was astounded. "To think that Jesus was here and I permitted Him to leave without a greeting," he thought. Then he questioned in his mind what the Master had thought of the service, was it spiritual or mechanical? Was the sermon a gospel sermon, or merely a showy lecture? Was the singing worship or a performance? Dr. Gordon suffered agony as he considered these things and in the midst of his suffering he awoke. The memory of the dream abode with him and revolutionized his ministry. He was made to know that in spiritual presence the Master was always present "even unto the end of the world." He resolved to preach every sermon, offer every prayer, discharge every pastoral duty as if Jesus were actually sitting in the pew or accompanying him on his pastoral rounds. He saw to it that none but sincere Christians were members of the choir; in fine, he spiritualized that entire church by mak-

ing the membership feel the abiding presence of the unseen Christ.

Dr. Gordon gave to the world the story of this dream and its effect on his life and the church to which he ministered, in a little book entitled, "A Spiritual Autobiography." I have often wished I could put a copy of that book into the hands of every Christian. I think the reading of it would make for faithful attendance in God's House. But every Christian has, or ought to have, and can easily secure a copy of the New Testament, and that book teaches more powerfully than Dr. Gordon's autobiography the ministry of Jesus' spirit and the unseen shepherding of His sheep.

The Master will miss you if your seat is empty. He will mark the empty pew. He will observe your wilful absence from His house. He will bless the meeting with His benediction of peace and you will miss the blessing if your seat be empty.

"To-morrow is the new moon and thou shalt be missed because thy seat will be empty." "The new moon" in our study of the duty of church attendance may signify any special service in the House of God,—a revival, a missionary rally, and special season of spiritual worth when there is great need for every member to be at the post of duty in the House of God. At such seasons the minister's heart sinks low as the grave if stretches of empty pews confront him; at such seasons the

minister's spirits rise on eagles' wings if it be given him to behold the faithful filling their pews.

At such seasons, with minister, members and Master in accord, the House of God becomes redolent with the perfume of praise and the fellowship of the like-minded. The Unseen Presence broods and blesses and thus merged and unified into oneness of spirit the congregation sings with whole-hearted unction the grand old hymn:

"I love Thy kingdom, Lord,
The house of Thine abode,
The church our blest Redeemer saved
With His own precious blood;
I love Thy church, O God,
Her walls before Thee stand,
Dear as the apple of Thine eye,
And graven on Thy hand.

"For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend;
To her my cares and toils be given,
Till toils and cares shall end.
Beyond my highest joy,
I prize her heavenly ways,
Her sweet communion, solemn vows,
Her hymns of love and praise."

"To-morrow is the new moon and thou shalt be missed because thy seat will be empty."

THE SERVANT IN THE HOUSE

PRAYER

Our Father, consecrate Thou our play as well as our work. Make us to know that Thou wilt be our stay and shield, none the less upon the field of honest sport, or place of clean amusement, than in the sanctuary. Then shall we behold the beauty of holiness and discern clearly the consequent heinousness of sin. Help Thou us to perceive that only the pure of heart can see God. Teach us to safeguard our thoughts and to think on things that are pure and good and wholesome. Strengthen us to stamp with our strong disapproval the things that are prurient, irreverent, and vicious, and to shun such evils as we would a noisome pestilence. Inspire us to approve the things that are excellent and make for soul-wealth. Save us from the heresy that would divide life into the secular and the divine, and so encompass us with compartments and enclosures both unnatural and confusing. Bring us to see life as a unit, and all for Thee; to view salvation as completeness of character, and as wholly Thine. Shine out upon us in all Thy glorious fulness of power and warmth, and as the flower turns to the sun and opens wide its petals under the genial glow, so shall we turn to Thee, Thou our God and Lord, and be satisfied. Through Thy dear Son, our Savior, we ask it. Amen.

VII

THE SERVANT IN THE HOUSE

“He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes.” “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, can not love God whom he hath not seen.”—*I John* 2:9-11; 4:20.

THIS is a passage of Scripture upon which Mr. Charles Rann Kennedy bases his drama of “The Servant in the House.”

In every programme of the play this scripture appears and it is also on the fly-leaf of the book of the same title. Verily the spell of Jesus is everywhere to be found. The best poetry; the noblest orations; the most worthwhile fiction are permeated with the Christ spirit. The masterpieces of painting and sculpture bear witness to the power and charm of the great Galilean. And now, the stage has come under the same spell, and lo! one of the popular successes of the hour breathes from first to last the gentle spirit and radiates that all-pervading brotherliness of Jesus of Nazareth. In brief, the story of the play is as follows:

The scene is the house of a vicar of the Church of England. His family consists of his wife and their niece Mary. There is trouble and distress in this house. In the first place the vicar has an outcast brother whom he has treated shabbily. This brother, Robert by name, is Mary's father, the little girl whom the vicar and his wife love as their very own. Mary has not been told of her father. She does not know what manner of man he is, nor does she know of a certainty that he is alive. Word has been received that Robert is coming back and the information brings consternation to the vicar and his wife. Nor is this all. There is something wrong with the drain under the church; the sanitary condition is frightful and something must be done to remedy it at once. The vicar's wife's uncle is the Bishop of Lancashire. He is thoroughly unscrupulous and a rascal; but he is rich and as a last resort they have appealed to him for help, though the vicar loathes him and turns to him now much against his own better nature.

There is also a mysterious Bishop of Benares of whose great work in India they have heard much and his arrival is hourly expected. This is the state of affairs when Manson, the new butler from India, arrives and assumes his duties. Manson is really the Bishop of Benares and he is also the long-lost brother of the vicar, "Joshua," from whom have come no tidings for years. Manson is

the Christman. He is full of the spirit of Jesus. Indeed, the fashion of his garments and his general appearance is strikingly like the conventional portraits of our Saviour. Manson sees at once the situation, and in a quiet, yet masterful manner, he begins to set the troubled house in order.

It is Manson who receives Robert, the prodigal, and by his kindly spirit awakens a new and better impulse within him; it is Manson who helps to discomfit and unmask and dismiss the hypocritical Bishop of Lancashire; it is Manson who aids the vicar to be a truer priest of God; it is Manson who melts the stubborn will of the vicar's wife; it is Manson who comforts and encourages Mary; and at last, it is Manson who rights the entire family, and thus brings peace and joy. As the curtain descends, Manson has just disclosed his identity as Joshua, their long lost brother, now Bishop of Benares, Mary has thrown herself into her father's arms. The vicar gives his hand to Robert, while the vicar's proud wife, now humbled, extends her hand to the prodigal also, the vicar clasps Manson's hand. Thus, they all form a kind of cross, while the vicar sinks to his knees sobbing as one broken, yet healed. The servant, who has permitted the spirit of Christ to lead him, has turned discord into harmony and made that home a fit habitation for disciples of his Lord.

There are a few features of this beautiful drama

that I wish to note more particularly. First: the masterfulness of Manson. From the first one feels the power and equipoise of Manson's personality. He is calm, resourceful and always gentle. He is never anxious, hurried, or in danger of stampede. There is a great lesson just here. Violent outbursts of temper, volcanic wrath, envy, malice—how ill do these things become the Christian life. If we are to be masters of others, and of circumstances, we must first master ourselves. Self-mastery is the beginning of a life of overcoming and conquest. Manson is able to conquer this household because he first conquered himself.

Second: the lesson of brotherhood. Manson is a most gracious exponent of that fundamental teaching of Christ "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." He makes poor, outcast Robert feel that warm, brotherly love that makes the whole world kin. Soon they are addressing each other as "comrade." Manson does not rebuke Robert in so many words, but he makes him ashamed of his wickedness, and puts into him a holy impulse to live differently. Men are hungering for brotherhood, hungering for the great brotherly teaching of Christ, to find expression in the lives of His followers. Anything in the church that approaches the caste spirit, or a cold, forbidding formality, is as different from the teaching and practice of Jesus Christ as are the bleak, bitter,

cold days of January with snow and ice different from the rare days of early June and ripe cherries.

Third: "The Servant in the House" shows the possibility that lies within the reach of everybody who will follow the leadership of Christ. One man who is full of the spirit of Christ can influence a whole office, or a store, or a shop, for good. One really Christlike person can revolutionize a home. The idea or principle emphasized by Manson is a cardinal principle of Christianity. Christ emphasized it over and over again. It is a Christian living; "by their fruits ye shall know them." It is an exemplification of such texts as "ye are the salt of the earth," "ye are the light of the world."

In these days of so many demoralizing plays, of so many "problem" dramas that are full of subtle and vicious suggestion, it is refreshing to find such an exception as "The Servant in the House." The problem of amusements is a vital one and the church cannot solve it by putting the ban on the theatre as a whole and thus leave it to pander to a constituency that love the low, the suggestive and the vicious. At any rate the church has not solved the amusement problem by the attitude of disapproval and suspicion of the theatre. Because some works of fiction are bad, we do not denounce all fiction. We discriminate. The commendation of the good wherever we see it be-

comes our duty as well as the condemnation of the bad.

Managers furnish the people what they want, what they will pay to see. Undoubtedly, there would be far less objectionable dramas on the stage if people were taught to discriminate and avoid some plays as they would a pestilence. The amusement question is here to stay. We cannot blink it away. The many questionable plays that are being produced these days, together with the multiplicity of the five- and ten-cent theatres where thousands flock to see moving pictures,—all furnishes food for sober reflection.

The church can take one of two attitudes toward this question. First: the church can denounce the theatre as a whole; profess to see nothing of the good in the institution and advise its members to stay away. This has been, and is, the position of many sincere Christian workers.

Second: the church can point out the perils of the play-house and cry boldly against certain vitiating tendencies, at the same time frankly conceding the possibilities of the theatre for good. Without entering into the matter of whether or not a Christian should frequent the theatre (which is a responsibility resting upon each one personally), the church can teach and urge discrimination. This is the position of an increasing number of Christian workers also sincere and filled with a very earnest desire to benefit humanity.

For my own part, I do not believe we should permit an institution that was originally employed to enforce religious lessons to be monopolized by the forces that make for frivolity and folly.

I am glad for the opportunity to pay a tribute to "The Servant in the House," as a beautiful and helpful production; one that has positive and definite religious values. And I hope and pray that the day will sometime dawn when every art shall be Christianized entirely and made a minister both to intellectual and spiritual growth of humanity; when the low, the immoral and the vicious shall give place to the noble, the pure and the good; when generations yet to be shall be able to acclaim:

"Blow, trumpet, for the world is white with May,
Blow, trumpet, for the long night has rolled away,
Blow through the living world; let the King reign."

**THE FINE ART OF TAKING
SECOND PLACE**

PRAYER

Lord, the world has been too much with us and we have partaken of its ways; we have been sordid and selfish and vain. We have set our minds on high things, we have coveted chief seats, and fat salaries, and the praise of men has been as sweet music to our ears. We are of the earth earthy, for we have been living as if there were nothing better in life than to eat, drink, and be merry. Father, we have sinned; we have missed the mark of our high calling; we are unworthy of the least of Thy mercies. Forgive us, we beseech Thee. Purge us of our worldly thoughts and worldly wisdom; cleanse us from secret faults and let not presumptuous sins have dominion over us. Rid us of self-consciousness, self-absorption and all self-glorying. Strip us of all sham and make us to see how meager our souls are. Make us all over again, Lord, and build us anew after the mind of Him who, though a Prince of glory, became the Servant of all. We seek His spirit of ministry and self-sacrifice, Lord, that all the dross of our lives may be consumed. By thy good pleasure, Father, we purpose now to seek first the kingdom and the righteousness which is of Thee. In the Name of Him who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Amen.

VIII

THE FINE ART OF TAKING SECOND PLACE

"He must increase, but I must decrease."—*John*
3:30.

UNQUESTIONABLY John the Baptist was one of the world's greatest characters. A certain student of history ranks him among the six greatest characters who ever lived. Another, and the ablest judge of human conduct the world has ever known, places John in a class by himself. Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist." Greater tribute than this no man has received; greater tribute than this no man can hope to receive.

John the Baptist was a voice crying in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord." There must always be such voices. They are the harbingers, the heralds, the pioneers, who make possible the better day and the grander era. Usually their lot has been opposition, scorn and finally persecution. In the old days their usual reward was the headsman's axe, the stake or the dungeon cell.

The punishment that we mete out to our contemporaries who are in advance of their fellows is not as crude as of yore, only a little more cruel. Instead of the axe and the stake we stigmatize them by calling them "demagogues," "fanatics" and "heretics," and do our level best to discredit them in the eyes of the people. Then another generation will build them monuments and our grandchildren make them subjects of high school orations.

"Far in front the cross stands ready
And the crackling fagots burn,
While the hooting mob of yesterday
In silent awe return
To glean up the scattered ashes
Into history's golden urn."

John the Baptist foretold the coming of the Christ. He was the morning star that ushered in the Sun of Righteousness. He called on the people to repent and declared that the Kingdom of God was at hand. Great crowds came to hear John preach, and were baptized of him in the River Jordan. Some who came surmised that John himself was the promised Messiah. For the sake of all who held such belief John said:

"I indeed baptize you in water unto repentance; but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire."

To John baptizing in the River Jordan came

Jesus to be baptized and John would have hindered Him, saying: "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" But Jesus answering, said: "Suffer it now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." And then John baptized Him.

Then descended the dove, symbol of the spiritual endowment of Jesus, and the Divine voice spake, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

This is the culminating point of John's ministry. Henceforth John pointed his disciples to "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." Jesus' popularity began to wax. John's began to wane. Witnessing this fact and jealous for their leader's success, some of John's followers came to him, saying: "Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond the Jordan, to whom thou hast borne witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to Him."

John's reply is superb. He said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." John, the morning star, whose beams heralded the approach of the Sun of Righteousness, is willing to melt away in the lovelier light that now floods the world.

John the Baptist is the supreme exponent in the Scriptures of the *Fine Art of Taking Second Place*; but three other characters deserve honourable mention along with him. Samuel, for instance, who, as last of the judges of Israel, gave way to

Saul, the first king, and stepped down and out from high office unembittered and with the best of wishes for his successor. And there is Jonathan, the knightliest soul of the militant days of Israel, jeopardizing with superb abandon his succession to the throne; and all because in honour and love he preferred David to a crown. Likewise Barnabas, the big-hearted disciple, who in the beginning of Paul's Christian career stood sponsor for him, introduced him, indorsed him, and then stepped into the shadow of one destined to be the greatest of the Apostolic group.

"He must increase, but I must decrease." That the matter of taking second place is a necessary art must be apparent to the thoughtful. The very progress of society depends upon the shifting of responsibility from old to younger shoulders, the stepping forward of some to assume leaderships, the stepping back of others into the ranks of the followers. Now, if this necessary taking of second place be done graciously, it becomes indeed one of the finest of arts and is far-reaching in its ministry. But alas, this necessary process is with some a thing of ugliness and a cause of pain and disappointment for many days.

I once knew a man who had held a county office for twelve years and when compelled at last to surrender that office to younger hands he fairly bristled with wrath. He talked as if he verily believed that the voters of his party owed him that

office as long as he lived. He withdrew from the public, and lived a sort of hermit's existence the rest of his days. How foolish and useless such conduct, and who but that man himself was the sufferer thereby? If that man could have only accepted the inevitable graciously and congratulated his successor and thanked his constituency for having honoured him for twelve years, he might have spent his declining years in the full affection of his neighbours. As it was he became a cynic, and a veritable "old man Grump."

Taking second place is really an educational process, and in a larger way is more educational than holding first place. It is often easier to lead than it is to follow and a good loser is better than a good winner. By the same token a good second fiddler is better than a superb first violinist and much more difficult to secure.

There is something fine and strong that comes by way of the discipline of defeat. Just now a great American, who for years lived in the white light that beats upon the outstanding personality, is out of high office and in apparent eclipse. His career is full of victories and only a few defeats. He was a leader who led. One wonders if in these days of comparative obscurity he is not growing in the great graces of the spirit and will not in the end be greatly blessed by seeming defeat.

Few men or women try to adjust themselves to change; instead, they prefer not to work at all if

hindered from working in their own way and in the lead at that.

Henry Ward Beecher was one of the most accomplished students of human nature the American pulpit has known. He also was a lover of a good horse. One day he went into a livery stable to hire a horse and buggy. In a short time the vehicle was ready for him. As Mr. Beecher took his seat and gathered up the lines he said to the liveryman, "What sort of a horse is this, anyway?" "A good one," was the reply; "that horse will work anywhere you put him." Mr. Beecher's eyes twinkled as he observed, "How I do wish he was a member of my church."

That taking second place is essentially and thoughtfully Christian is certainly true. Jesus condemned in vigorous language the selfish love of pre-eminence. In Matthew 23:6 He scores the Pharisees for loving the chief seats at feasts and in the synagogues. In Luke 14:8-11 Jesus counsels guests at marriage feasts to seek the lowest places rather than the conspicuous seats. "For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Paul, in Romans 12:10, writes, "in honour preferring one another," and in Philippians 2:3 he writes, "Each counting other better than himself."

At Northfield, Dr. H. C. Mabie related an instance that is to the point: "In Sherman's campaign it became necessary, in the opinion of the

leader, to change commanders. O. O. Howard was promoted to lead a division, which had been under the command of another general. Howard went through the campaign at the head of the division, and on to Washington to take part in the review. The night before the veterans were to march down Pennsylvania Avenue, General Sherman sent for General Howard and said to him, 'Howard, the politicians and the friends of the man whom you succeeded are bound that he shall ride at the head of his old corps, and I want you to help me out.' 'But it is my command,' said Howard, 'and I am entitled to ride at its head.' 'Of course you are,' said Sherman. 'You led them through Georgia and the Carolinas; but, Howard, you are a Christian.' 'What do you mean?' replied Howard. 'If you put it on that ground it changes the whole business. What do you want, General Sherman?' 'I mean that you can stand the disappointment. You are a Christian.' 'Putting it on that ground, there is but one answer. Let him ride at the head of the corps.' 'Yes, let him have the honour,' added Sherman. 'But, Howard, you will report to me at nine o'clock and ride by my side at the head of the whole army.' In vain Howard protested, but Sherman said gently but authoritatively, 'You are under my orders.' When the bugle sounded the next morning, Howard was found trembling like a leaf, and it required another order from

General Sherman before he was willing to take the place assigned him. He had, as a Christian, yielded the place to another which rightfully belonged to him, and in the grand review found himself not at the head of his corps, but at the head of the army."

This historical incident is refreshing and beautiful. Not that the taking of second place is always rewarded as in General Howard's case, but that his spirit was altogether admirable and thoroughly Christian.

Of similar spirit was Dr. F. B. Meyer of London, when, after years of pulpit success, his popularity seemed imperilled by the coming of the brilliant G. Campbell Morgan to a nearby pulpit. "It was easy," Dr. Meyer said, "to pray for the success of Campbell Morgan when he was in America. But when he came back to England and took a church near mine it was somewhat different. The Old Adam in me was inclined to jealousy, but I got my heel upon his head and whether I felt right toward my friend, I determined to act right. My church gave a reception for him and I acknowledged that if it was not necessary for me to preach Sunday evenings I would dearly love to go and hear him myself. Well, that made me feel right towards him. But just see how the dear Lord helped me out of my difficulty. There was Thomas Spurgeon preaching wonderfully on the other side of me. He and Mr. Morgan were so

popular and drew such crowds that our church caught the overflow, and we had all we could accommodate."

"He must increase, but I must decrease." The finest of all arts is that of self-taking second place that the spirit of Jesus may have first.

The process of growing in grace, of development in Christian life is by dying to self, and living to Christ; by letting His spirit increase, and putting our own fleshly spirit to death. Recall Paul's great words in Galatians 2:20: "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth within me." Some one once knocked at Martin Luther's door and called out, "Does Martin Luther live here?" The great reformer called out, "No, Martin Luther died some time ago, and Jesus Christ lives here."

Some one took a friend to hear the brilliant Maltbie Babcock preach. After the service the man who had invited his friend to attend church with him said: "Well, what do you think of him?" "I cannot say," was the answer, "but I know I think better of God because of him." Splendid, splendid praise. The business of preaching is so to hold up Christ that men will lose sight of the messenger in the thought of the great message of God that he preaches. Thus Thomas Guthrie wanted to hold up the cross so that the world might not see his little finger.

"He must increase, but I must decrease." A

little girl walking in New York with her father, saw some workmen on the top of a building some twenty stories high, and she asked: "Papa, what are those boys doing up there?" He replied that they were not boys, but men who looked like boys because they were so high. The little philosopher meditated for a moment, then said solemnly: "They won't amount to much when they get to heaven, will they?"

The dear little girl's comment may be taken as a parable by all those who seek the mind of Christ. For "putting on the Lord Jesus Christ," and making "no provisions for the flesh," we shall by and by leave the carnal nature aside as the chambered nautilus leaves "its outgrown shell by life's un-resting sea."

"He must increase, but I must decrease."

**THE NARROW WAY AND THE
OTHER WAY**

PRAYER

We thank Thee, our Father, for the wisdom which is from above, and is pure, peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated. For such wisdom we entreat Thee now. We are perplexed and confused by a multitude who seek to show us the way to go. Counsellors of the wisdom of this world beset us behind and before, and their words are smooth and plausible. They call us to a way not of Thine, and they counsel policy and subterfuge and evasion. They urge compromise and chicanery, their appeal is to the lust of the flesh and the vainglory of life. And their words trouble us, Father. They tempt us sorely. Help us to withstand such tempters as Jesus withstood the Evil One on the mountain and in the desert. Help us to spurn these subtle temptations as Thy Son did the offer of the earthly crown. Rid us of the inclination to trifle with conscience and the desire to experiment with sin. Open our eyes to the danger signals on every hand, and the red lights of warning flashing out from the pages of Thy Word. May the abundant life as taught by Christ entrance us, and lead us into that amplitude of the faith that saves. May we be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled unto all the fulness of God. In the Name of the Prince of Life. Amen.

IX

THE NARROW WAY AND THE OTHER WAY

“Enter ye in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it.”—*Matthew 7: 13-14.*

“Strive to enter in by the narrow door.”—*Luke 13: 24.*

EVEN the occasional reader of the New Testament has surely noticed the two classes that are so frequently contrasted upon its pages. Just two classes, mark you, not three or four, or six, but two classes. For example, the Builders on the Rock and the Builders on the Sand; the Wise Virgins and the Foolish Virgins; the Good Tree and the Corrupt Tree; the Rich Soil and the Poor Soil; the Good Seed and the Bad Seed; the Obedient Son and the Disobedient Son; the Faithful and the Unfaithful Servants; the Sheep and the Goats; the Broad Gate and the Narrow Gate; the Broad Way and the Narrow Way.

In a very true sense there are only two classes of men the world over, namely, the Worldly and the Spiritual. On the one side, those who live for the present only, who do not take God into ac-

count save in the most superficial way, who are of the earth earthy, and mind earthy things. On the other hand, those who open their hearts to truth divine and give place to the Spirit, who struggle and strive to live on a high level of mind and ministry.

The dividing line between the friends and enemies of our Lord is not organization, nor creed, nor doctrine, but Spirit. "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Jesus once refused to forbid a man from doing a good work in His name, although he belonged to another organization. Of that man He said, "He that is not against us is for us." On another occasion Jesus pronounced against a group of people of His own Jewish Church who were attributing His power for good to the Evil One, thus hindering the cause of righteousness. Of such He said, "He that is not with Me is against Me."

Here in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus makes large use of the sharp, twofold contrast. He uses the figure of a gate, a figure which has long been popular with teachers. He has been speaking of the Kingdom of Heaven, which indeed is the theme of the entire Sermon on the Mount. "Enter ye in by the Narrow Gate," He says, "for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it."

The Two Gates, the Two Ways, and first, the Broad Gate.

The Big Gate! The Easy Gate! The Popular Gate! Observe its size! Mark well its ornamentation! Behold the crowds that are surging through it! This gate attracts; this gate invites; this gate stands proudly flaunting its apparent freedom, beauty and opulence. This gate has a voice, and cries, "This way, ye people, old and young, men and women. I am big and broad and prosperous. I am convivial. I am full of good company. Come on, all of you, come join my happy throng!"

This gateway first appears in the vision of the growing boy and girl, suggesting the shirking of task or neglect of study, and it thrusts itself ever across the vision of life at all ages and in all places. It is the short cut to an education, the get-rich-quick scheme for business success. It is the direct appeal to the sensual, the worldly, and the lazy loving. The Broad Gate seems to promise one so much, and to provide for one so princely. Of course, it is a popular gateway since the crowds usually are the unthinking, or the shallow-thinking. Carlyle's reference to the masses as "the plurality of block-heads" is caustic, but the criticism is not without justification. Long ago the epigram was coined that "There is no royal road to astronomy," but every generation doubts this and has to be taught the truth by bitter experience.

Every once in a while I meet a young man who wants to enter the ministry by the Broad Gate. He wants to "cut across lots" to success. He wants a pulpit without paying the price. He wants a church without a student's career. He wants to preach without painstaking preparation. The world is full of folks who take naturally to the Broad Gate. Jesus was tempted by the Broad Gate. How very broad and beautiful that gate was pictured to Him by His tempter. "Again the devil taketh Him into an exceedingly high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and he saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." Yes, the Broad Gate was thrust squarely before Jesus' eyes. It was the easy way apparently, no cruel criticisms, no taunts, no rebuffs, no crown of thorns, no cross. But the feet of Jesus never sought the broad way, and its blandishments were not able to win Him away from His heaven-chosen path.

Now, a strange aspect of this Broad Gate is the disappointment it brings. It lures and deceives and betrays. Its very broadness is a delusion, a snare and a lie. The great crowds enter and the entrance seems spacious indeed, but by and by the traveller is sensible of a closeness and a suffocation. He pauses to look about. Lo! the way is becoming narrow, and there are walls close by on either side, and instead of the open sky overhead

there is a low ceiling and the air becomes oppressive, and the way which at first seemed so broad is as a prison corridor. There is confusion and darkness and at last despair settles down like night on the traveller. The Broad Gate that seemed so spacious an entrance to the broad way has ensnared, the broad way has narrowed and contracted till it has become a *tomb*.

Do I seem to speak in a parable darkly? Then picture the awakening of the young man who refused to do fruitful work in school or college, and gladly leaving his books with their burdens, rushed unprepared into life. See him lured by the broad gate of get-rich-quick and plunging through its gilded portals in a fever to amass a fortune, or make a name. Behold him conscience-stricken, the walls closing in on him, the wealth he had hoped for eluding him like a will-o'-the-wisp, and all his life "cabined, cribbed and confined."

Over against the Broad Gate and the Broad Way Jesus sets the Narrow Gate and the Narrow Way. This Narrow Gateway stands before all life that is worth while. Will a man be a scholar? Then through the Narrow Gate must he go. Will he be an artist or a civil engineer, or a merchant prince, or a statesman, or a tradesman? There is no other way save by the Narrow Gate. This is to say, success of any kind comes by way of renunciation of one kind or other, by learning the art of omitting. One cannot attain unto proficiency of any

sort and do certain things, think certain thoughts, live after a certain loose fashion. He must choose. He cannot have both. He cannot at the same time enter both the Broad Gate and the Narrow Gate. He must choose one or the other, and the broad, easy, splendid gate seems to suffer as compared with the narrow, exacting gate.

Consider the Narrow Gate as it pertains to the religious life, which is the real life after all, and upon which all other vital things must necessarily depend.

The Narrow Gate is in front of the religious life. God put it there! There it will stay. And it is narrow judged by the standards of those who confuse liberty with license. Repentance of sin and confession of sin are at the very fore of conversion to Christ, and they seem to be narrow and a trifle old-fashioned to the modern mind. Why should a man go to such inconvenience and humiliation? Why make any sort of confession? Why submit to baptism? Why become a church member? Why not go the broad way and ignore anything so old-fogy as a public confession of faith? The Narrow Way means obedience to certain simple, yet definite commands of Christ. There is no exception, all must obey, and obedience is a great leveller. The gate seems petty and poor and oh, so very narrow. Is it?

Paradoxical enough, the more one restricts himself the more freedom he will have; and conversely,

the less restriction one binds himself to, the less liberty he will have.

Now an extraordinary thing about this Narrow Gate is that it surprises and satisfies and indeed belies its name. At first it may seem narrow and exacting, and not especially inviting. But lo! as one passes through it and on along the narrow way, he becomes conscious of amplitude and spaciousness and liberty. Instead of cramped quarters there is delightful freedom, the atmosphere is clear and invigorating. One can look up a long way. No man-made roof is over his head, but instead the vast dome of heaven, and all the wonders of the sky. There are pleasant and fragrant breezes that come from off the hilltops of faith and prayer, and there is no confusion, no sense of littleness and barrenness. God is near, and one is keeping company with innumerable like-minded comrades. The march is toward the westering sun, but there is no sadness of farewell, no moaning of the bar experience.

Do I speak in a parable again? Is this hard to understand? Is what I have been saying dark? Surely not. The path of the just is a shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

The Broad Gate leads to the Narrow Way, and the Narrow Gate leads to the Broad Way, and the narrowness of the Broad Way is appalling, and the wideness of the Narrow Way is soul-emancipating.

"Enter ye in by the Narrow Gate," so counsels Jesus in Matthew's story of the Saviour's life.

"Strive to enter in by the narrow door," exhorts Jesus in Luke's account of the Master's ministry. The word "strive" is a strong word, as used in this connection. It means "agonize," it means "strain every nerve," and surely it is worthy every endeavour to enter into that blest fellowship, where are

"The freer step, the fuller breath,
The wide horizon's grander view,
The sense of life that knows no death,
The life that maketh all things new."

Jesus is the door, and by Him if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

THE WEEKLY COMMUNION

PRAYER

Father in Heaven, our gratitude goes out to Thee for the institution of the Lord's Supper. Here indeed we may commune with Thee and so keep in mind the life and death of Jesus Christ. We confess our need of such a memorial, we are so strangely unmindful of the things that matter most, so prone to remember much which we do well to forget forever. May this simple memorial be to us more than sweetest song or strongest sermon. May it help us to remember Him who came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and may it especially put us in remembrance of His death upon the Cross, in which He remembered so wondrously all humanity. Here may we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, here may we behold the all-sufficiency of the great Sin-Bearer; here may we renew our covenant with Thee and pledge our allegiance again by sacred vow. Here may we be still and know that Thou art God. In the hush of this quiet service help us to rid ourselves of all malice, all impurity, all haughtiness of spirit, all sordid ambitions. Emptied thus of self, fill us with the Mind of Thy dear Son. In His Name we ask all. Amen.

X

THE WEEKLY COMMUNION

“Gathered together to break bread.”—*Acts* 20:7.

THE seventh and eighth verses of Acts, the twentieth chapter, are both eloquent and significant. The verses are eloquent because they describe a meeting of the early Christians amid hostile surroundings, in an upper room in Troas, and the Faithful gathered together, with Paul as guest and preacher. The verses are significant because they not only record the assembling of the Christians “upon the first day of the week,” but indicate that the prime purpose of the coming together was “to break bread,” and that Paul’s sermon was incidental and secondary to the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Standing by themselves, these verses are not, perhaps, conclusive proof of the weekly custom, but taken with other records the evidence is cumulative and exceeding strong.

1. *The New Testament as a whole indicates that the custom of the early church was of weekly communion, and that the prime purpose of the Christian assembly was to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. When Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper He did not stipulate any special time for its ob-*

servance. He simply said, after giving the loaf, "This do in remembrance of Me." After Jesus' death and resurrection the first day of the week came to be the time of the gathering of the disciples together, and the young church of Christ from the beginning honoured the first day of the week, instead of the seventh, as the time of meeting to worship God. Now a study of the New Testament Scriptures shows that with this assembly of the Christians on the first day of the week the Lord's Supper was observed as not only a part of the worship, but as the climax of the service. The seventh verse of Acts, the twentieth chapter, reads as follows: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow." This was written thirty years after the first church was established in Jerusalem, and indicates how deep-rooted the practice had become with the Apostolic church.

In First Corinthians, which was written prior to Acts of the Apostles, in chapter 11:20-34, we learn that it was the church's established custom to meet upon the first day of the week, and that it was also the custom for the church to celebrate the Lord's Supper every time they thus met.

It is interesting to note further that practically all Biblical students, church historians and distinguished commentators are agreed that the custom

of the early church was weekly communion. I shall quote only a few of a long list of eminent men.

Dr. Doddridge, Congregationalist: "It is well known that the primitive Christians administered the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day."

John Calvin: "And truly this custom which enjoins communicating once a year is a most evident contrivance of the devil and whose instrumentality soever it may have been determined."

Alexander Carson, the distinguished Baptist: "There is an admirable wisdom in the appointment of Jesus in the observance of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week. In this ordinance Jesus Christ is evidently set before us crucified for us. Here the gospel is presented to the eyes as well as the ears. Would it be any loss to them, if all the churches of Christ were to return to this primitive practice?"

To these names may be added the illustrious ones of John Wesley, Albert Barnes and Adam Clark in behalf of weekly communion as warranted by New Testament example.

The fact that we have the example of the Apostolic churches for weekly observance of the Lord's Supper would with many answer the question as to the frequency of the institution. Why should we discontinue such practice? Is not this example in itself so large, so compelling as to give it almost

the weight of an express command? I think it is, but none the less it is worth our while to look more closely into the nature of the ordinance as possessing rich value for us. I do not believe Jesus ever gave a commandment or that we are given Apostolic precedent for an ordinance without a value in the act itself. I once heard a man say that if Jesus had said, "He that believeth and standeth upon his head shall be saved," he would stand on his head and never question the command for an instant. Now there may be some virtue in such a view to some people, but I cannot believe the Creator puts a greater premium on blind faith than He does on intelligent reasoning faith. "Come, let us reason together," urges the prophet, speaking for Jehovah. I am not saying that we must be able to understand every command before we obey it. I do not say that it is impossible for me to think of God asking of us anything that stifles reason or serves simply as a test of obedience. I believe, therefore, that beyond even the example of the apostolic church's practice of weekly communion there must be deep significance.

2. *There is a social element in the Lord's Supper.* How sensible we are of the fine and thoroughly enjoyable social features of a meal with friends. A dinner at a hotel or restaurant among strangers, while it may satisfy physical hunger, lacks that hospitable atmosphere that permeates a meal among friends. The Lord's Supper gives

this social, this democratic feature or element to a gathering of Christians. It is a great leveller. It buries all distinctions for the time being. It should put to the death feelings of hate and enable us all to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The Duke of Wellington went once to take the Lord's Supper at his parish church. A very poor old man went up the opposite aisle and reached the communion table close behind the duke. Some one came and asked the old man to move farther away, or to rise and wait until the duke had received the bread and wine, but the eagle eye and quick ear of the great commander caught the meaning of that whisper. He clasped the old man's hand and held him so as to prevent him from rising, and in a reverential undertone he said, "Don't move, we are all equal here."

3. *Still again the Lord's Supper constitutes the only truly meditative part of the service*, the only part where the congregation is active not passive. For instance, the singing leads or should lead us. It inspires, it quickens or it entertains. The prayer leads us. The sermon leads us. But when it comes to the Lord's Supper we must walk alone. All that has come before is to help us to walk alone when we come to the Lord's Supper. There we are or should be face to face with our Saviour. Alone with God. This observance puts a premium on silence. There is a gospel of silence. "Be still

and know that I am God." Says the psalmist, "while I was musing the fire burned." How difficult it is to preserve a silent hour these days. Distracting influences are everywhere at work. At home, abroad, at resort or camp in the woods there are more or less distractions. But here we may have it, in plenitude and power. Here at the Lord's table with closed eyes we may worship "the Invisible alone."

I know what is in the minds of some. I know that some have said the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper tends to make it common, that the repetition of the Supper so often makes against its impressiveness and impairs it as an aid to faith. Is there any merit to this objection? The same logic might be used against the Sunday service as a whole. Why not worship once a month, once a quarter, once a year? Why sermons after sermons, over one hundred a year? Would not one great service a year, one great sermon a year, one great programme of singing a year, one beautiful observance of the Lord's Supper a year suffice?

A few years ago the Legislature of New York passed a law that the Stars and Stripes should float every school day in the week over the schoolhouse. The motives of the framers of the law may have been mercenary. I know that was charged against them. However that may have been, will the daily flying of the flag make for or against the love of country? Would it be better to fly the flag

but occasionally than over every school every day? What will our answer be to this question?

A gentleman once called upon the aged John Ruskin. As they were chatting in the parlour a servant entered and said, "Master, there is a fine sunset." Ruskin left the room, and, returning in a moment, said, "It is worth seeing." The two went out on the veranda and watched the sun as it sank slowly below the horizon and wrought its miracles of splendour in the heavens. Not a word was spoken. The old master was rapt. And yet he had been gazing upon sunsets from his childhood.

The Cross is the sunset of the most glorious life; and, to him who is intent on living that life, it will always be worth seeing.

The last day of Matthew Arnold's life was the Lord's Day, and he worshipped at Sefton Park Presbyterian Church, Liverpool, where he heard Dr. John Watson preach. It was communion Sunday, and preparatory to receiving the loaf and fruit of the vine the congregation sang "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross." The hymn greatly impressed Mr. Arnold. At dinner in the home where he was a guest, he remarked that the hymn had affected him deeply, and then slowly and impressively he repeated the four stanzas:

"When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

"Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
Save in the death of Christ, my Lord;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

"See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

With the memory of the music and the thought of the words of this great hymn in his mind, Mathew Arnold died. To the discerning soul, thirsty for God, the Cross is surveyed in the communion of the Lord's Supper as nowhere else. Why not this ineffable privilege every Lord's Day?

THE GLORY OF GOD'S HOUSE

PRAYER

Thou God of love and mercy, we are glad when Thou callest us to worship in Thy house. We are glad and rejoice because Thy house is a place of prayer, a place of blessed fellowship and a house of that hope which is the anchor of the soul. Our ears have been assailed all the week by the harsh din of the shop, the shrill noises of the streets and the small talk of the store and office. Speak Thou now to our souls and teach us how to live and love as becometh men and women who have been purchased with a great price. We bless Thee for the memories of Thy house, the friendships and family ties which we have known and felt through worshipping together in Thy sanctuary. Our Father, we thank Thee to-day for the homely meeting-house in the country where some of us first met Thee in public worship. Bless all rural congregations wherever assembled to-day, and bless likewise those assembled in city and town for worship. We thank Thee for the beauty of praise, for the power of prayer, for the strength of communion in Thy House. We beseech Thee to forgive us our sometime irreverence and our careless and even flippant attitude toward religion. Make us to see the hurt done our souls by such loose regard for sacred things and places. Help Thou us, worshipping Thee in the church, so to apprehend Thee as to recognize Thy presence in every place and on every day. We ask these blessings of Thee in the name of our Master. Amen.

XI

THE GLORY OF GOD'S HOUSE

"For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the House of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."—*Psalms* 84: 10.

THE history of worship is interesting. Like all other histories, it is a record of growth and of evolution. The poet has said that "the groves were God's first temples," and to this day there are few places so contributive to the worshipful frame of mind as the mighty forests of oak and pine. From the first, man fixed on certain hallowed places from which he worshipped God. Abraham went a three days' journey to Mount Moriah that he might find a fitting place to worship. Isaac builded an altar at Beersheba because it was there that God appeared to him and blessed him. Under the splendours of a Syrian sky Jacob made his bed on the open plain. That night he saw a vision of angels and he named the place "Bethel," the House of God.

Thus did the patriarchs worship. After a while the Tabernacle was set up in the wilderness, forms and ceremonies, each with some significance, were introduced and ritualistic worship began to be. By

and by the great Jewish temple was builded. Without the sound of "hammer and axe" the splendid structure rose. Into its fabric went gold and silver and sweet-smelling wood. There in its sanctuary was the Shekinah, there the cherubim and seraphim.

What contrasts in place and manner of worship! Open plain and tent and temple! Simple the first; interesting and unique the second; imposing and magnificent the third. Are there not like contrasts to-day? Out yonder is the little country meeting house, snug by the turn of the road. How peaceful and pastoral the scene! Around and about the shade of oak and maple; near by the precincts of God's acre. Hark! the congregation is singing:

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord!
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word,
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
Ye who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"

Over against this scene is another. There rise the great massive walls of the city cathedral. Hear the silvery chimes of the bells! Hear the tremulous tones of the mighty organ! Hear the vested choir as they sing from Kipling's "Recessional":

"The shouting and the tumult dies—
The Captains and the Kings depart—
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!"

But whether the House of God be crude and simple, or grand, it is a Holy Place, and herein is part of its glory.

The men of God of long ago attached an awful sanctity to places of worship. Jacob, after a night of wrestling with a mysterious being, calls the place "Peniel," and exclaims: "I have seen God face to face." Moses is keeping the flock near Mount Horeb; a burning bush causes him to turn aside, and he hears a voice that says: "Draw not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." At Mount Sinai, mid lightnings and thunders, God gave the law to Moses. Consequently, that very mountain was held to be holy. No one could touch it save under penalty of death. When from its serene heights Moses came down to the people, his face shone like the face of an angel. As for the Temple, its every part was held to be peculiarly sacred, and Jerusalem was the Holy City.

Under the Christian dispensation there are no holy places in the unique sense that there were under the Patriarchal and Jewish. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." This spiritual worship is in a very large way quite independent of localities, and yet, wherever man sets apart a house in which to worship God, that place is given a significance of its own. It is dedicated to the Heavenly Father.

It is an assembly place for worship. It is a "meeting house" for the children of God.

If human lives are to be noble and fruitful for good there must be some sacred chambers, some shrines and trysting places for the soul. I know a young mother, who is in the midst of rearing a large family of little children. That lively group keep her busy from morning till night. It is almost impossible to preserve order in the rooms where the children play, or even in those which they pass through. Playthings, books and magazines are disarranged and scattered before the onrush of that frisky five. But there is one room always in order in that home—the guest chamber, and when the young mother is distraught or weary she enters into that orderly and quiet upper room, and after a little while comes from it serene, self-possessed and ready for her tasks. Now a church building ought to supply for humanity everywhere what that guest chamber does for that young mother.

I deem it obvious that we need more of that becoming reverence which our fathers had for God's House. This house in which we worship this morning is dedicated to His service. The Shekinah of old is not here. The pillar of fire, the cherubim and seraphim are absent. But God's great Spirit is here! "The Lord is in His holy temple; let the people keep silence before Him."

Before the priests went into the holy place of the temple they changed their garments. Array-

ing themselves in fresh, clean robes, they left the old ones outside, and thus immaculately apparelled they entered the sanctuary. That ancient custom has for the thoughtful a rich symbolism. We do best to leave outside the door of God's House the things of levity, the foolish joke, the light laugh, the gossipy whisper. Come into His courts with reverence and thoughtful demeanour. Come with joyful heart and with the spirit of praise and devotional frame of mind. Come to worship God in the beauty of holiness.

“Let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloisters' pale,
And love the high embowed roof,
With antic pillars massy proof,
And storied windows richly dight
Casting a dim religious light.
There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voiced choir below
In service high and anthem clear,
As may, with sweetness through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all heaven before my eyes.”

The House of God is a House of Prayer, and herein is further glory. God so ordained, Christ so taught. We may desire that it be otherwise. We may prefer that it be a house of song, a house of social intercourse, a house of entertainment; but God appointed it to be a house of prayer. Quiet meditation and silent prayer is meet preparation for a religious service.

The late Arthur T. Pierson once said that if he were to build a church he would have it constructed with as many exits as the Mormon Temple, and that he would say to his congregation (I quote from memory the substance of what he said): "If you must visit after the benediction, I beg of you to go out of doors as quickly as you can, and do not turn this place into a hotel lobby." I am not indorsing this entirely; indeed, I think it is too strongly put, I am only seeking to show how great souls feel the urgent need of cultivating the devotional spirit in the House of God.

It is a difficult undertaking to lead an audience in prayer. Spurgeon succeeded perhaps as few other ministers in taking his entire congregation in sweet communion to the very throne of God. When he had finished his cheeks were suffused with tears. Beecher was likewise marvellously gifted in public prayer. Only a few men can lead in public prayer as could these two great hearts. But, whether the minister is gifted in public prayer or feeble and faltering in his effort to voice the need of his flock, pray with him and for him as you stand or kneel. Bow the head, close the eyes and shut out the scenes that distract and disturb.

What a blessed unific prayer is! Catholic, Protestant and Jew meet thus on common ground. I once sat in a cathedral behind a poor, hard-working girl as she knelt in prayer. Her coarse hands pressed close the rosary, and as her lips

moved in prayer her body shook with suppressed sobs. Superstitious? Perhaps. Worshipper of images? Let God be her judge. Her spirit of devotion was beautiful to behold. Pray—this is the place, this is the hour. Open your heart to the spirit of the loving Father. Ascribe worth unto His Holy Name.

“Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer,
That calls me from a world of care,
And bids me at my Father's throne
Make all my wants and wishes known.”

The House of God is also a House of Hallowed Recollections, and this fact haloes it with glory. Can we ever forget the homely meeting house where we first worshipped God? How sacred the place seemed to us with our dawning conception of God and Christ and the angels. How familiar the scene and what a halo of glory rested over all. Just over there mother sat, and the light of peace was on her face. Oh, the old hymns they sang there, “Nearer, My God, to Thee,” “Jesus, Lover of My Soul” and “Shall We Gather at the River?” The favourite texts, especially John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” The hour of the Lord's Supper! Yes, the old meeting house wherein we made the “good confession,” and the scene of many a stirring revival. Oh, the precious memories, the hallowed recollections of the House

of God! How they link the households of the congregation together, services of joy and of sorrow, the bridal day and the funeral service. The strains of Lohengrin and Mendelssohn, the perfume of flowers, the brilliant processions. Then the slow and measured tread of weary feet, the array of sad-faced men and sobbing women. The solemn music, the comforting Scriptures, the words of sympathy from the minister. And even in this experience there may be balm and healing and sorrow not as the sorrow of those who have no hope.

Many a soul has been saved by the recollections of those early days in the old home church. It has been written so in fiction, and I doubt not has been enacted many times in actual life. A young man leaves the old roof-tree, comes to the great city, gets into wild and wayward paths and his feet are beginning to find the "great white way." One night he chances to pass a House of God. Hark! they are singing. Ah, that hymn! The same one they sang when with mother or sister he sat in the village church. A flood of blessed recollections rushes over him. The song holds him, draws him, he comes to himself and is saved as by fire.

For the House of God is a House of Hope, and herein is glory ineffable. A church building is eloquent. It is a symbol of God's existence and a reminder of His interest in the affairs of men.

There are times when a church building seems to have a voice and it seems to say: "We are pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not unto despair; pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed."

What a dreary land ours would be without the churches. Picture the passing of the House of God from city, village and rural community. Every cathedral, every church, every chapel, every meeting-house gone. A hundred thousand pulpits hushed. A million Sunday school children running wild and untaught of God. If such a calamity were to come the world would lose its faith and black despair, like a sable pall, would settle over a desolate land.

For what it has been, for what it is now, but still more, because of what it shall yet be, the House of God is rainbowed with glories. Amidst the ruins of the ancient temple the prophet declared that the "latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former." Amidst the present unnatural divisions and sad rivalries of Christendom, the sins of selfishness and foolish pride, those who love the Lord look for a day when the Glory of God's House shall be as the prophet's vision, a time when wars shall have ceased and the reign of universal brotherhood be a reality.

"Forgive, O Lord, our childish ways,
The separate altars that we raise,
The varying tongues that speak Thy praise!

" Suffice it now. In time to be
Shall one great temple rise to Thee,
Thy church our broad humanity.

" What flowers of love its walls shall climb,
Sweet bells of peace shall ring its chime,
Its days shall all be holy time.

" A sweeter song shall then be heard,
The music of the world's accord,
Confessing Christ, the Inward Word!

" That song shall swell from shore to shore,
One faith, one love, one hope, restore
The seamless robe that Jesus wore!"

THE PRODIGAL SON'S BROTHER

PRAYER

God of compassion and tenderness, Thy ways are not our ways. Thou lovest not as we do, partially and intermittently, but altogether and always. We thank Thee, Father, for this parable of parables in which Thy love overflows as a river in time of flood. We are all prodigals of Thy bountiful goodness, and that we have ever preferred the far country among aliens to our home with Thee and the blessed, fills us with poignant sorrow. We confess our sins, the sins we cannot count. In the light of Thy love which is as a great searchlight on our souls, we can withhold no darling sin; avarice, conceit, bigotry, jealousy, hypocrisy, and hate—O, rid us of all such forever. May Thy love break every barrier down, as we behold Thy reconciling face. We pray fervently for those yet in the far country reluctant still to turn to Thee. May they all come back—prodigal sons and daughters everywhere—come back to Thee in penitence. Grant us the privilege, Lord, of being used for the home-coming of some now starving their souls on the bare husks of the world. Make us to know the joy of soul-winning. Teach us how to take to the famished of spirit and the undone the Water of Life, and the Bread of Heaven, so that they will want to drink and eat at Thy table forever. We ask it, Father, in Thy Son's Name. Amen.

XII

THE PRODIGAL SON'S BROTHER

"But he was angry, and would not go in; and his father came out, and entreated him."—*Luke* 15: 28.

THE parable of the Prodigal Son is at once a familiar and popular pulpit theme. Ministers of all shades of theological thought like to preach from Luke, the fifteenth chapter, and this parable is a prime favourite with evangelists everywhere. This is not surprising, for the story of the prodigal is full of human interest. It is a life-drama in five acts: The Old Home, the Far Country, the Swine Field, the Homeward Journey, the Father's Welcome.

Here as in no other Scripture we are made to feel that

"There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea.
There's a kindness in His justice,
Which is more than liberty."

Familiar as this parable is, we seldom attach much importance to its latter portion, and most of us are accustomed to stop short with the twenty-fourth verse. The prodigal gets all the lime-light; his brother is left among the shadows. I propose

that we get a good "square look" at the older brother and that we study his character silhouetted as it is so darkly against a wondrously fair background.

Coming from the fields, the elder brother is astonished to find the whole house given over to gaiety and festivity. There is much bustle and confusion, there is going to and fro, and the soft sound of music comes from within. The elder brother stops outside puzzled and perplexed. Why should there be a feast without his knowledge and approval? What does it all mean? He calls a servant and asks for an explanation. The answer instead of reassuring him perplexes and pains him still more. "Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf because he hath received him safe and sound." At this piece of news the elder brother's surprised perplexity gives way to sudden anger. "So this is it," he muses, "a feast for him who has been living in sin and prodigality—a feast for such a fellow. Well, I will not go in. Let them get along without me." So, angry, sullen, jealous, envious, small-souled, the prodigal's brother is shown to us a most unlovely and unlovable man.

The prodigal son's brother is a pronounced type of the "respectable sinner." He had not lived as his brother. He had stayed at home and worked faithfully. He had kept himself decent. He was honourable and moral clear through. For all this,

let us give him credit. He seems to have been a dutiful son. Nor is there any place for excuse on the part of the prodigal for his sins. He had done wrong. He had sinned deeply. He had been foolish and short-sighted. He had sown a luxuriant crop of "wild oats," and, according to an inexorable law, he harvested pain, suffering and remorse. Yet notwithstanding all this the prodigal is a more lovable character than his boastful, self-righteous, unforgiving brother, who, while not disreputable, was a sinner of a repellent sort.

Somehow, we have divided sins into two great classes, those that seem to us respectable and the sort that we judge as disreputable and particularly heinous. Drunkenness, licentiousness, gambling, stealing, profanity—these we put in a class quite by themselves. These we inveigh against vehemently, and rightfully so. But we are prone to forget that selfishness, covetousness, malice, jealousy, gossip and false pride are also blameworthy in the sight of the great Judge of all the earth. This elder brother in his cold-heartedness, his stern, unrelenting spirit, is a type of religionist that called forth from Christ caustic condemnation. I think it was Beecher who, in commenting on the conduct of the elder brother in this parable, said: "To be perfectly moral, to be scrupulous in the every decency of society and to lose all sympathy for men, and all care for the weak and poor and imperfect,

in taking care of yourself, this is more horrible to God than if you were a drunkard."

And this is a type of religionist that has done untold harm to the cause of Christ. A man who has no love in his heart, no forgiveness for an erring brother, but is proud, distant and cold, carrying with him a sort of "holier than thou" atmosphere, is the most unlike Christ of all men, no matter how punctilious he be in preserving the forms and ceremonies—all the externals of religion.

"No man is great till he can see
How less than little he can be,
If, stripped to self, and stark and bare,
He hung his sign out anywhere."

Outside of the house, sullenly angry, the embittered elder son stands. He will not go in. So his father comes out and entreats him. But the young man is obdurate. His heart is not in the spirit of joy. Instead he is envious and jealous, and he says: "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, and I never transgressed a commandment of thine, and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends, but when this thy son came, who hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou killedst for him the fatted calf." Could any other speech have been so untimely, so unlovely as this one? It is like a harsh discord in the midst of an entrancing harmony. It is like a dash and flurry of snow and sleet on a May morning. It is like gall to the taste while honey is still on the

tongue. Incongruous and unhappy and preposterously out of place is this speech and conduct of the elder brother.

No wonder so many consider the parable ended when the prodigal is tenderly received by the father. This entrance of the other son on the scene is like freezing frost in June, when the cherries are ripe and the roses are blooming. The elder brother was jealous. This is easy to see. That

“Green-eyed monster which doth mock
The meat it feeds on,”

was taking possession of his being, and when jealousy comes in happiness goes out. Where envy abides, love starves to death. Jealousy! One thinks of Cain, of King Saul, of Naaman, of Othello, of Cassius and the long list of names that are coupled with jealousy's madness. Says Solomon: “Wrath is cruel, and anger is overwhelming, but who is able to stand before jealousy?” There stands the elder son angry and sullen. How dark and forbidding the picture! No, he will not go in and even the tender intercession of his father cannot melt his heart. He speaks of the commandments that he has never broken, unmindful that he is now breaking the greatest of all commandments—that of love. Character conceit is the worst kind of conceit. I once heard that gifted London preacher, G. Campbell Morgan, say that whenever a young man arose in prayer meeting and talked boastfully of his spiritual attainments, he

always made such a one the subject of special prayer. "When a man thinketh he standeth let him take heed lest he fall," is a good text for all of us to take to heart.

The prodigal's brother reveals to his father that he has been serving him all these years as a matter of duty and not of filial love. He reveals the heart of a servant, not that of a son. He shows clearly that he is not one with his father in love and sympathy, though outwardly he has seemed to be the soul of honour. So it may happen that after a lifetime of respectable living something may reveal the ugly truth that all the time we have lived an alien to God's love, wearing the "livery of heaven," yet not possessing heaven in the heart.

The old-time preachers used to spend a good deal of time speculating on this question, "Whom does this elder brother represent?" Some thought the Pharisees, some the angels in their relation to the human race and still others had different theories. But I am best satisfied with the answer of an old saint, who, when the question was up for discussion in a ministers' meeting, said: "I know the fellow very well. I met him only yesterday."

"Who is he?" they asked eagerly, and the old man replied solemnly, "Myself." Then he went on to explain that a few days before a man who had lived a rather worldly life had received a gracious visitation of God's goodness, and conse-

quently he had been envious and irritable. All of us are thus tested. The prodigal's brother is a picture of many of us in our attitude to people who seem to be blest of God far out of proportion to their service for Him. Unable to account for it, we grow sarcastic or suspicious, and frequently pronounce judgment that is both unkind and unjust.

The prodigal's brother was absolutely devoid of tenderness. The springs of his affections had gone dry. If the prodigal had met him before he met his father it is not likely he would have gotten into the house at all. The elder son would have had no welcome for the prodigal. "Don't you come back here," he would have coldly cried, "you have had your chance. You have consumed your share. There is no place for you here. Go back to your swine tending and your husks!" What hard-heartedness, and how it suffers when contrasted with the great loving heart of the father so full of forgiveness!

Last spring, you planted a vine beside the porch or trellis. Carefully you tended that little plant, watering it and teaching the tendrils to twine about the woodwork. Warmed by the sun and nourished by the rain, the vine grew and gradually climbed halfway up the trellis. The leaves began to put forth and in a little while would have afforded some shade as well as a thing of beauty to grace the place and please the eye. But one night there came

a storm. The winds blew furiously and the rain fell in torrents and when you looked out of doors the next day you saw that vine lying flat on the ground and in places half submerged by the muddy water. And then what did you do? Why, this: you stooped over and very tenderly lifted up the fallen vine, you twined it carefully about the trellis again and in places you fastened the tendrils by means of pieces of string. Then you watched it eagerly for a day or two, and you observed with pleasure that the vine you had lifted up was beginning to take hold of the woodwork itself and warmed by the genial rays of the sun gave promise of complete restoration to life. And you were happy.

Be as kind to men and women who suffer, who weep, who waver and who fall as you were to that vine, which knew neither pain nor pleasure. Be as willing and ready to lift up your brother man, your sister woman, who has fallen low, as you were quick to succour that vine. Give men and women as fair a chance to begin all over again. And do it not once or twice or seven times seven, but seventy times seven.

But I would not turn away from this parable without seeing in the father's attitude toward this jealous and selfish-souled son a very wonderful illustration of God's love. Observe that the father is very patient and kindly with him. "Why, son," he says in substance, "all that I have is yours.

This is no time for such a spirit. Your brother whom we thought of as dead is alive. It is proper that we should rejoice. It is right that we have music and a feast. Come, let us go into the house and make merry."

Let us hope that the lad went, that he met his brother becomingly and entered full into the spirit of the occasion. For be assured, if he was not moved by such a display of love on his father's part, no outburst of wrath would move him.

Henry Ward Beecher once had a letter from a man saying: "Preach on hell next Sunday night. I will be there to hear the sermon. I am contemplating taking my own life. Maybe a sermon on such a subject will save me." Mr. Beecher preached from the text: "In my Father's house are many mansions," and began the sermon by saying: "If this tender teaching won't save a man from destruction, no other passage possibly can."

I believe that fully, and if this fifteenth chapter of Luke does not melt the rebellious heart of man completely, there is none other that can.

The heart cry of every man and woman who has been lifted out of self into Christ is that of George Matheson:

"O love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee.
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be."

THE MIND OF CHRIST

PRAYER

Most holy Father, we behold in the mind of Thy Son, as in a mirror, Thy purity and Thy love. We see Thy longsuffering, Thy mercy and Thy will toward all Thy children. And thus beholding Thee we are brought to deep contrition. Hear Thou our confession, Father: we have harboured hate, we have been jealous of our place and power; we have been envious of the good fortunes of others. We have withheld forgiveness from some who sought it, and we have even prided ourselves on our ability never to forgive a wrong. O God, we repent in sorrow and humiliation. Measured by Christ we have no spirituality to boast of; compared with Him, we are in character values as dwarfs and pygmies. Forgive us, Lord; we have been unacquainted with Christ and strangers to His spirit, but now we seek His mind. Pity us in our poor pride of birth and genius and social standing. We seek now only the obedient filial spirit of Thy Son. We desire to think of Thee as He thought of Thee. We crave such consciousness of Thee that no experience, not even the death of our beloved, can mar or break. We seek that brotherly attitude of patience and love toward all mankind, which Jesus ever taught. We pray Thee to help us in the difficult work of loving those who have wronged us, and to enable us to possess Thy Son's disposition so largely as to be able to pray for those who plan our destruction. So lead us, Lord, till we shall be like-minded with Him. Amen.

XIII

THE MIND OF CHRIST

“Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”—*Philippians* 2:5.

SOME years ago a book appeared that sprang at once into popular favour. It was not a great book judged by exacting literary standards, but it vibrated a rich chord of sympathy and made a profound impression. It was entitled “In His Steps,” and its thesis was “What would Jesus do” if He were in our place? It told, for instance, of an attractive young woman with a divine voice, who was sorely tempted to go in for grand opera, but submitting her desire to the test—“What would Jesus do?”—she abandoned the career and sang without pay for a street mission.

Unquestionably this book accomplished good, but there is a fallacy in the story, or rather in the thesis, of which the story is but the vehicle. The fallacy is that of attempting to imitate Christ’s acts rather than seeking to possess His mind. Our world is not His world of nineteen centuries ago. He was of the Orient, we of the Occident. New problems confront us, and indeed, there is not specifically much in His life that we can imitate. We need to go further back than His actions.

There is something more fundamental, more basic, and that is His mind. "Have this mind in you," says Paul, "which was also in Christ Jesus."

The word "imitate" is not a good word to use in this connection. Some of the synonyms of "imitate" are "mimic," "mock" and "ape." When I was a very young man and just entering the ministry an old lady advised me to "ape" a certain very distinguished minister of my communion. Unconsciously, perhaps, the good old lady used the exact word to express her meaning, for that is precisely what I should have been doing had I attempted to imitate the rather eccentric pulpit mannerisms of the minister she had in mind.

Imitation usually concerns itself with manner rather than with mind, with the letter rather than the spirit. It is true that twice in his Epistles Paul exhorts his readers to imitate him even as he imitates Christ, but the Greek word means "follower," and indeed is so translated in the King James version. A follower may or may not be an imitator.

The followers of Melancthon habitually drooped one shoulder in imitation of their leader. Pupils quite unconsciously imitate the teachers whom they admire the most. It was a habit of President J. W. McGarvey, of the College of the Bible, Lexington, Kentucky, to grasp the lapels of his coat when speaking in public. Consequently, when the

students who sat under the dear old man and admired him, preached their first sermons they grasped the lapels of their coats for all the world just like President McGarvey. This illustrates the objection to the word "imitate." Imitation is concerned with the outside and frequently with the purely incidental and non-essential.

It is easy to imitate John the Baptist's raiment of camel's hair, his leathern girdle and his denunciatory style and his long shaggy locks. Of such imitations there have been many. But it is another and a more difficult thing to possess John the Baptist's mind.

"Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus." If we shall possess the Master's mind we may be sure that fruitful life ministries will follow. While if we begin by trying to do what He did, without knowing, or even caring for His mind, the likelihood is that we will never progress far in the ministries that so ennobled His life and blessed the world.

What, pray, is meant by the "mind of Christ"? For one thing, not what is popularly meant by the mind of Shakespeare, or of Raphael, or of Edison. When we refer to the minds of such men we instinctively think of genius, of skill, of brilliance. To have Shakespeare's mind would be to possess an "intellectual ocean, whose waves touched all the shores of thought." To have Raphael's mind would be to know art, to have knowledge of ex-

quisite blends and harmonies of colours. To possess Edison's mind would be to have an inventive, scientific wisdom, and this is passing wonderful, but this is not what is meant by the mind of Jesus.

By the mind of Christ is meant His view of Life and His motives.

To Jesus God was a Reality. He lived in perfect, daily consciousness of His heavenly Father. How soon that began we do not know, but we have at least one hint that it began very early. In the temple there at Jerusalem, when the mother Mary asked the boy Jesus why He had thus dealt with them, He answered: "Knew ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" And all through the pages of the Gospels Jesus moves living so intimately with the Father. To that Father He prayed, with that Father He talked. In the great events of His life and the everyday common things of life Jesus talked with the Father. God to Him was so very real, so personal, so close, so good.

Now a lively belief in the existence of God is fundamental. Such a belief is the axis on which life at its best revolves. "Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him."

On his last visit to this country Henri Vigand, for so many years our Secretary of Embassy at Paris, told a story of one Renaud, who came to Paris as Senator from a district in the Pyrenees.

Renaud engaged a room at a hotel in Paris and paid a month's rent. The proprietor asked him whether he would take a receipt.

"A receipt is unnecessary," said Renaud. "God has witnessed the payment."

"Do you believe in God?" sneered the host.

"Most assuredly," replied Renaud. "Don't you?"

"Not I, monsieur."

"Ah," said Renaud, "in that case please make me out a receipt!"

To be of the same mind as Jesus is to live in daily consciousness of the reality of God, is to be sure of God, and willing to walk by faith where light cannot guide or illuminate the way.

To Jesus the World was the Creation of the Good Father.

He looked out upon the world joyously. His Father had created it for the abode of His children. Sunshine and air, blue sky and flowers and birds, moon, stars and sun—He made them all, and made them for His children. He marked the flight of the sparrow, and found in it a lesson of God's love for His children. "Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they

spin, yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more care for you, oh ye of little faith? "

There are those who view the world as a huge machine grinding and wrecking and ruining forever. They behold no glory of God in nature and see only the cruelty and blood, and they rule God out of the universe. Man is only a superior animal and at his best is vanity. The grave awaits him and will swallow him up forever. According to this theory the pagan Sophocles was right:

"The happiest fate of man is not to be,
And next in bliss is he who soon as
From the vain world and all its sorrows free
Shall whence he came with speedest foot return."

Jesus' view was the very opposite of this. Life was a privilege, a vast opportunity. To have the mind of Jesus is to view the world as the creation of the good Father.

"A haze on the far horizon,
The infinite tender sky,
The rich, ripe tints of the cornfield,
And the wild birds sailing high.
And all over upland and lowland
The charm of the goldenrod.
Some of us call it autumn,
And others call it God."

To Jesus man was the child of the Heavenly Father.

Nothing could shake Him from that knowledge. Even in sin He saw still the Father's child. The parable of the prodigal son reveals this view of Jesus in never-to-be-forgotten story. The prodigal in all his rags and sin is still a son, and the elder brother so unlovely in his selfishness and conceit is still a son. The poor dying robber receives the gracious assurance of pardon and promise of companionship with Jesus in Paradise.

Dr. Kelman of Edinburgh reports an incident at once pathetic and full of Christian hope. A class of medical students were being taken through the wards of a hospital. Their professor was showing them an unusual case, that of a man lying upon his cot helpless and hopeless, a poor broken derelict of humanity, a man whose fires were all burnt out prematurely, a sad wreck of manhood. The professor said in Latin, "*Fiat experimentum in corpore vili.*" (Let us try to make the experiment on this worthless body.) But the man was an old university man and before his crash he too knew Latin. He rose on his cot and answered, "*Pro hoc corpore vili Jesus Christus mortuus est.*" (For this worthless body Jesus Christ has died.) And the poor sin-smitten fellow answered well, for such was the mind of Christ.

To have the mind of Christ is to look out upon the world of men, wicked men, scheming, selfish,

conniving, plotting, sinful men, as well as noble, forgiving, unselfish, tender, loving men and regard them as all children of the Heavenly Father.

In fine, to have the mind of Christ is to view life "steadily and whole"; is to think of God as so real, and so near, as to be an ever present help in time of trouble; is to see in nature the handiwork of the good Father for all His creatures; is to regard all men, rich and poor, black and white, wise and foolish, good and bad, as children of the Heavenly Father, and, therefore, our brothers. This is the mind of the Master, and seeking that mind, rather than imitating Christ, is the high adventure of the Christian.

THE KINSHIP OF THE SPIRIT

PRAYER

Father in Heaven, forgive us our foolish pride in blood and lineage, our glorying in ancestry and family traditions. We confess our proneness to estimate kinship with the great and rich of earth more highly than kinship with the poor and lowly. We acknowledge with deep contrition that our eyes have been dazzled by the glitter of pomp and power, the vulgar show of wealth, the authority of office and place of distinction. Forgive, we beseech Thee, our childish ways and the tyranny we have permitted the toys of this world to hold over us. Lord, open our eyes to perceive how poverty-stricken we are in spiritual assets. Verily we are Thy poor relations and we are such despite the vast resources of spiritual wealth at our command. Father, open Thou our eyes to the possibilities of kinship with Thee through Thy son. Make us to know the everlastingness of such relationship, and the vast estate which falls to those who with Jesus Christ are joint heirs of Thy riches. May it please us always to do Thy will as revealed in Jesus, and so enter upon our high kinship with the King of Kings. In the name of our Elder Brother. Amen.

XIV.

THE KINSHIP OF THE SPIRIT

"And there came His mother and His brethren; and, standing without, they sent unto Him, calling Him. And a multitude was sitting about Him; and they said unto Him, Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren without seek for Thee. And He answereth them and saith, Who is My mother and My brethren? And looking round on them that sat round about Him, He saith, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother."—*Mark* 3:31-35.

THE relatives of Jesus were stumbling-blocks in His path. Jesus' kinsfolk were a hindrance to Him because they misunderstood Him. For His own immediate family Jesus might have prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," as fittingly as for the cruel crowd that nailed Him to the cross.

To be misunderstood by those of one's own flesh and blood is not an uncommon experience, and is always a bitter one. Manifestly some will misunderstand us; be sure that some will question or impugn our motives, but so long as these are other than intimates or those whose approval we covet we do not take their attitude much to heart. Rather, we take their indifference as a matter of course. It is quite another thing, however, when the members of a family misunderstand one of

their own circle and set about to hinder him accordingly. Then, the way becomes distressingly difficult and only the stout of heart will other than faint by the wayside.

It was Jesus' experience to be misunderstood by His own folk. His relatives misunderstood Him and were as stumbling-blocks in His path. In this paragraph of Mark, the third chapter, the reference is clear that the mother and brethren of Jesus were seeking to draw Him away from His work. In this instance Jesus' kinsfolk were actually siding with His enemies in opposition to His ministry. All leaders have been misunderstood—misunderstanding is part of the price they pay for leadership. But was ever a leader so grievously misunderstood as Jesus of Nazareth?

There is only one other experience harder to bear than this one of being misunderstood by those near and dear to us, and that is to be *doubted* by them. When our loved ones say to us, "I do not understand you. I cannot get your view nor your motive," we experience a sense of keen disappointment. But there is left us heart enough to reply: "I wish you could see this as I see it. If you did you would champion it as warmly as I do." But when those whom we love and admire say by their attitude if not by so many articulate words: "I do not believe in you. I have no confidence in you," the genial current of our souls is too chilled for rejoinder. To be misunderstood is painful, but to be

doubted and suspected is "the most unkindest cut of all."

To Jesus this experience of distrust by His own came in aggravated form. Mary misunderstood her Son but she seems never to have doubted Him. His brethren, however, did not believe in Him. John, in the fifth verse of the seventh chapter of his Gospel, specifically testifies to their unbelief. The half-brothers of Jesus' household were coldly sceptical of their gentle-mannered, yet revolutionary-minded brother. These brethren called Him names. "He is beside himself," they said; that is, "a fanatic," "a crazy man." These terms are fresh in our minds, and it seems but yesterday when we heard them used to stigmatize a former president of this Republic. Now Jesus' attitude toward His family, who, as a whole, misunderstood Him, and in part actually mistrusted Him—His attitude toward this hindering household makes profitable reading.

Jesus was both just to His family and loyal to His ideals. Only a very strong character can meet thus masterfully so delicate a situation. When we are doubted by kith and kin, when they view coldly and critically our most cherished plans, two subtle temptations beset us. If we are stubborn of spirit, or high-strung temperamentally, rebellion sweeps through us, heated words tumble from our lips and estrangements result. If, on the other hand, we are tender of heart and easy-going, the likelihood is

that we will surrender the ideals and abandon the purposes that invited the opposition. Thus peace is secured, but at how great a price!

Jesus was different. He emptied no vials of wrath upon His household, not even upon His brethren who so sorely tried Him. In the hour of Jesus' death that saddest figure at the cross, His mother, was the object of His tenderest solicitude. There is a wealth of sentiment in these two verses that tell the story. "When Jesus, therefore, saw His mother and the disciple standing by whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold, thy mother! And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home."

Jesus was just to His family, but not at the cost of His convictions. No opposition of kinspeople, no intervention of relatives ever deterred Him from His ministry. In the incident of His boyhood visit to Jerusalem He met the questioning rebuke of His mother with the respectful, yet earnest answer: "How is it that ye sought Me? Knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?"

The attitude of Jesus to the opposition of His own household is clearly defined in the closing verses of Mark, the third chapter. And the heart of the teaching of the incident therein narrated can be put in a single sentence: *Spiritual kinship is more than natural.*

The highest kinship is that of the spirit rather

than of blood. There are families whose members are far apart in all relationship save that of the family tree. They have no intellectual, social or spiritual fellowship. Kinship of blood may or may not be noble; kinship in the spirit of Jesus Christ is both noble and deathless.

What Jesus said of families being divided by His coming; what He taught of the impossibility of men and women becoming His disciples who put earthly relationship before spiritual,—these so-called “hard sayings” must be interpreted by Jesus’ own example under most trying circumstances.

For example, take that dark saying of Jesus in Luke 14: 26: “If any man cometh unto Me, and hateth not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life, he cannot be My disciple.” In the sense of choosing the path of duty rather than the counsel of His own kinspeople when the two conflicted, Jesus “hated” His relatives. Yet, withal, how tender He was with them, and how considerate of their needs. He “hated” His brethren in the sense of the word’s usage in the above Scripture; He loved them as only Jesus could love.

“Who is My mother and My brethren?” asked Jesus that day His household attempted to take Him away from the post of duty. “And looking round on them that sat round about Him, He saith, Behold My mother and brethren! For whosoever

shall do the will of God the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." The holiest tie, then, is not of blood but of spirit; the strongest relationship, then, is not the natural, but the spiritual.

Let us confess that most of us have a weakness in favour of relationship to the great and famed of earth. If you should visit a certain city of the South the residents will point with pride to the home of a famous Confederate general's widow. Ride through the streets of a Northern city and your guide will not fail to show you the home of a former president's daughter. Should you chance to visit a little Western village and remain for a single day you will be told that on such and such a street resides a full cousin of Mr. Bryan. Imagine, if you can, the sensation that would follow if a blood relation of Jesus of Nazareth should be discovered. What headlines the daily papers would print! How the people would crush and crowd and crane their necks to see a cousin of Jesus of Nazareth walk down the streets! And yet, the flesh and blood relatives of Jesus were farther from Him than Mary Magdalene, the one-time outcast; or Zacchæus, the ex-chief publican and one-time grafter; or the penitent robber on the cross; or Jerry McAuley, or S. H. Hadley, or a million others who found fellowship with Him in spirit.

We have heard with interest much of the so-called "first families," but few of us have esteemed highly the real "first family," into which every

man and woman may enter most freely. "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." And it was in Jesus that God gave us the great setting forth of the Divine will.

A thousand things may break or mar natural relationship; not anything, not heights, nor depths, not powers, nor principalities, nor death, can sunder spiritual kinship. Beginning to be our brother here and now, brotherhood with Christ shall continue forever.

"Kinsman, Friend, and Elder Brother
Is His everlasting Name."

THE FUTURE OF THE FAITH

PRAYER

Father of Light, with whom there can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning, shine down upon us and lighten the path for our feet. Illumine our minds and drive away all doubt and darkness from our lives. Envelop us in the heavenly glow that our stubborn wills may become wholly Thine and our divided affections fixed forever on Thee. We confess our ignorance, our prejudices, our petty jealousies, our childish bickerings, and our foolish controversies. Forgive us, Lord, and in the large light that Thou hast caused to shine upon us in Thy Son may Godliness become our chiefest goal. We thank Thee, Father, for the leaders and reformers Thou hast sent the world from time to time to bring a new vision of Thee to humanity. We thank Thee for their courage, their persistence and their heroic endurance. Into their labours we have entered and because of their sacrifices we are richer by far. We pray Thee to raise up such heavenly heretics in every generation that Thy slumbering church may be aroused, that the complacent and self-satisfied may be stirred to such a zeal for Thy House, that cross-bearing may become more than a figure of speech. May the story of Thy martyrs and missionaries fire us in these days of ease to high service for our fellow men who know not Jesus Christ. Out of our abundance may we share our blessings with others who have so little. Teach us to do without luxuries that others may have necessities. Fill us with a passion to make known to all peoples the knowledge of Thee which we have received through Christ, and so hasten that glad day when voices shall be heard in Heaven saying: "The Kingdom of the world is become the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ and He shall reign for ever and ever." Amen.

XV

THE FUTURE OF THE FAITH

"When the Son of Man cometh shall He find the faith on the earth?"—*Luke* 18:8.

THIS question of Jesus follows hard on the heels of a parable illustrating the potency of prayer. Jesus said there was in a certain city a judge, who feared not God, nor regarded man, and that a certain widow kept coming to him and saying: "Avenge me of mine adversary." At first the judge gave her no encouragement, but, undaunted, she kept up her visits and continued her demands. At length this judge began to relent and he said to himself: "Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me I will avenge her lest she wear me out by her continual coming."

From this homely illustration Jesus turned to God's children, who cry to Him day and night, and declared that God would avenge them speedily. And then He added, with a tinge of sadness and solemn concern, this question: "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh shall He find the faith on the earth?"

The marginal reference to this text has it "the

faith"—not simply faith. Jesus was not raising a question that men should cease to be religious. He knew men too well to question that. He knew better than Homer that "all men long for God." He knew that men would continue to worship a Superior Being and cry up to Him in seasons of distress and sorrow. It was not faith in general that Jesus was concerned about, but "the faith," the conception of God He had taught, and the standard of love He was bringing, and the truth He had taught. Would men perpetuate it, would it grow and flourish, or would it droop and die?

The faith Jesus taught and lived was a new and a larger faith. Of this it is difficult to understand how there can be two opinions. The faith He taught possessed all that was good in the old, and more. Jesus demands more of His followers than the law of Moses exacted. The rich young ruler could keep all the laws of Moses, but he could not or would not keep the new law of love that Jesus taught. Hence, he fell back and went to his own. Jesus had sowed the seeds of a new conception of God, a new idea of man and of man's duty to man. Would the soil germinate the seeds? Would the tender plants receive nourishment sufficient for growth? Would the weeds choke out the good plants? Jesus was concerned for the faith. Would it persist, or would it perish?

"If the Son of Man cometh shall He find the faith on the earth?" Of all the questions Jesus

asked, and the Gospels record a number, none is fuller of deeper feeling than this question. It is a question such as an able and beloved instructor might well ask himself on a commencement occasion. Surveying the bright and hopeful faces of his pupils about to receive their diplomas a serious question arises in his mind: "All is well to-night; but if I should return twenty-five years hence would I find my pupils still loyal to the ideals I taught them?"

Or, more intimately still, this question is such a one as might naturally arise in the minds of devoted parents at some tender family scene when the sons and daughters are present and in joyous spirits. Looking upon the scene the parental pride of the father and mother gives place to parental concern, and into their thoughts the question comes, "To-night our children are sheltered, guided, loved; but if we were taken from them and came back two generations later would we find these sons and daughters in mature years still loyal to the high ideals of their upbringing?"

"When the Son of Man cometh shall He find the faith on the earth?" Nearly nineteen centuries have passed since Jesus asked this question. How have the centuries answered it? Three voices speak.

The first is a voice of triumph, and it answers proudly, almost grandiloquently: "Look at the on-march of Christ's teaching; look at the old world

waking up and seeing with new vision-power; see barbarians becoming civilized; lo! shackles falling from slaves; schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, asylums, churches, emerging; behold Freedom free and Liberty alive and Democracy triumphant!"

The second voice is a voice of failure, and it answers disconsolately, even bitterly: "Look at greed still rampant and remorseless in its sway; the weak and poor still downtrodden; behold needless wars still sapping the lives of strong men and sending their women to premature graves; see vice commercialized and virtue sacrificed to lust and an aristocracy of money replacing that of blood, and truth still on the scaffold, and wrong still on the throne."

The third voice is the voice of truth, and it answers modestly but firmly: "Nineteen hundred years of Christianity have witnessed the slow but certain onmarch of Christ's spirit and teaching. The world of men who have heard the gospel message is to-day on a higher level than was ever known before. High-seated wrongs give way slowly, but they give, thank God. Deep-rooted evils are being pulled up one by one, and cast aside to wither in the heat of public scorn. The day breaks and the shadows flee away."

"When the Son of Man cometh shall He find the faith on the earth?" Interesting as the past's answer is to this question, the present interests

us still more. What of "the faith" in the years that are to come? What qualities will insure the persistence of Christianity?

This is a large question and I am sensible of the difficulties in answering it adequately. There are, however, certain fundamental things that are manifest to the interested student of Christianity. The perpetuity, establishment and final triumph of the Christian faith depend upon at least four rich qualities in the lives of professed Christians.

1. Intellectually.—A certain open-mindedness must characterize and distinguish the Christian thought if "the faith" accomplish the purpose of its Founder. If intolerance and bigotry had prevailed the faith would have been stranded on the shores of history long ago. Hospitality to truth, charitably dispositioned toward larger light is a token of loyalty to Christ. There is yet more light to break from God's Word. The mines are inexhaustible, much undiscovered treasure is still concealed in the Holy Scriptures. No one has drunk the wells of the Spirit dry. In a very true sense the so-called heretics have been the seed of the church, and in the instances where they died for their heresies their blood was not shed in vain.

Martin Luther, John Wesley, Roger Williams and Alexander Campbell, to mention but a few of a goodly company, were all heretics in their day in so far as they protested against a static inter-

pretation of Christianity and turned their faces toward the dawning day. Every generation needs a fresh quota of such heretics as these serene souls. Without their successors the faith shall seriously suffer.

One glory of the progressive spirit is that while it honours the leaders of the past it does not dishonour and virtually repudiate them by simply sitting on the work that they laid down. Paul, in First Corinthians 3:21, 22, 23, set forth admirably the open-mindedness Christians should cultivate: "Wherefore let no one glory in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

2. Spiritually.—The culture of the soul, the practice of fellowship with the Father. Nothing can be substituted for this and in importance it stands supreme. In the beginning of the Christian life it is the natural which is first apprehended by the convert. The ordinances, the ceremonial, the ritual, the things he can see or know with his physical senses, these are to the fore in the young disciple's vision. But as he grows in knowledge of Christ these things will fall into the background and the great spiritual values, fellowship with God, the life of prayer, the seeking of the mind of Christ—these will come to the front, but not noisily nor rampantly.

There is also a place for mysticism in spiritual culture, a mysticism not only undivorced from very practical service, but actually seeking for such service.

3. Socially.—The prompt application to all problems of evil, the principles of the Sermon on the Mount. "Salt of the earth," "light of the world" and "leaven" are most meaningful phrases used by Jesus to describe the kind of work He expects of His followers. The application of the principles and spirit of Jesus' teaching to society is absolutely essential to the onmarch of "the faith." Christianity's "salt" is the lives and influences of the followers of Christ, and such must preserve the right, truth and justice, or cease to be known as Christians. No evil can withstand the antagonism of an united Christendom; no injustice can long survive when the Christian conscience of a community is aroused. The principles of the New Testament have inspired and supported the progressive spirit of every age. And, in the battle now on with the bottle, not all the ingenious attempts to twist the Scriptures into a support of the saloon can dim the lustre of Jesus' "Yes" to the question: "Am I my brother's keeper?"

4. The missionary zeal and passion.—Without this in a single generation "the faith" would dwindle into hide-bound sectarianism and provincial partisanship. How basic the missionary spirit

was in the early church bulks largely into evidence when it is recalled that the first-century Christians converted much of Asia and a good part of Europe without a pipe-organ, or a surpliced choir, or a single cathedral.

Cut the missionary nerve from the organism Christ left us in His church and death would ensue to that body. Motives for missionary endeavour will change,—they have changed, but the supreme motive abides, the constraining love of Christ. The progress of Christ is world-wide and all-encompassing. The field is the world, the last man is included, and the command is "Go!" The fires upon the missionary altars of the faith, unlike those perennial flames on the altar of the Vestal Virgins, must never be suffered to burn out, and allowed to burn low only at the gravest peril.

Given these vital qualities—open-mindedness, ever-willingness to learn, personal fellowship through prayer and devotional use of the Scriptures, prompt and decisive applications of the principles of Christianity to social sins and vices, the missionary passion, the burning heart for converts to Christ and for Christ—given such, and the faith Jesus brought will not only not perish, but it will finally cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

"If the Son of Man cometh shall He find the faith on the earth?"

THE BENEDICTION BEAUTIFUL

PRAYER

Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations, our God, and our Eternal Home. Pilgrims in a world of change and decay, we rejoice that we have access to One who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Voyagers on an uneven sea and swept by fiercest gales, we bless Thee for that haven of peace where storms are never known. Our Father, Thy mighty arm has never been shortened to save, and Thou art with us to-day as in the times of the patriarchs and the Israelitish nation. Thou who didst befriend Abraham, befriend us; Thou who didst bless Jacob and lead Moses, bless and lead us on; Thou who didst comfort Martha and Mary through Thy Son, comfort and assuage the sorrows that sweep over our life. Blessed Father, Thou art our all in all, and Thou forgettest us never. Unto Thee we commit all our blessed dead; unto Thee we commit our loved ones who still abide in the flesh, and are subject to all life's vicissitudes; unto Thee we commit ourselves, and we beseech Thee that conscious of Thy unwearied care for us we may live and die as unto the Lord. In the Name of the Risen Christ. Amen.

XVI

THE BENEDICTION BEAUTIFUL

"The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another."—*Genesis* 31:49.

IT is a curious fact that this tender sentiment which has become the benediction beautiful of a million Christian Endeavourers is of lowly, even ungracious origin. Born in the spirit of distrust and suspicion that existed between Laban and Jacob, this sentiment, like some human beings of lowly birth, has come into fulness of honour and nobility.

A fragment of the narrative from *Genesis* will suffice to give us the setting replete in Oriental colouring.

Jacob and Laban, his father-in-law, were shrewd schemers. The story of their sharp dealings makes interesting, but not pleasant reading. For twenty years the two men experienced constant friction through the duplicity of first one and then the other. Weary at last of such domestic and business infelicity, Jacob took advantage of his father-in-law's absence, gathered together his possessions and with his family fled the country. Laban, learning of his flight, immediately set out in pur-

suit, and the two with their rival camps came together in a stormy meeting at Mount Gilead. Jacob was angry, Laban was full of accusations. Jacob in passionate utterance recounted his long and laborious sojourn with his father-in-law and flung these facts in the older man's face:

"These twenty years have I been in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy flock, and thou hast changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the fear of Israel, had been with me, surely now hadst thou sent me away empty."

This speech seems to have produced a twinge of conscience in Laban, for he softened perceptibly and straightway counselled a covenant of peace. Accordingly, Jacob took a stone and set up a pillar, and the heap was called Mizpah, which signifies "the watch-tower."

Then Laban said, "The Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another." A solemn covenant followed, with God, not man, as witness. On the one hand Jacob was not to mistreat Laban's daughters, and on the other hand Laban was not to pursue Jacob further, but permit him to go to the land of his fathers in peace, and both were to regard that spot as a boundary, beyond which neither would pass with hostile purpose. It was as if the two

men had said in that hour of covenant and parting, "We have precious little faith in each other's word, but pledging it thus and making God our witness, we do not believe either will be so hardy as to violate it."

Such is the story of the origin of this benediction now so freighted with tender sentiment and Christian temper, for the Endeavourers have added a phrase that links the words with the later and fuller revelation:

"The Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another. For Christ's sake. Amen."

I

Consider this benediction as applied to the partings of this life, the separations, the good-byes and farewells.

How very early our homes experience this heart test, this pull at the deeps of our affections. It begins usually with the starting of the little ones to ward and district school, and it reaches its climax in the wedding day of the daughter beloved. To the mother heart there is an experience of sweet sorrow on that day when for the first time the toddler starts off to school. The long, long journey has begun in earnest now. The little feet have taken in brave sincerity the great world path. Frank L. Stanton has put this experience in tenderest verse:

"He's sich a little feller,
But he mind de teacher's rule,
And take his books and toddle
On his little feet to school.

"His mammy stan' and watch him,
So mannish gwine by,
She hidin' wid her apron
De tear drap in her eye.

"De fust time she done ever missed
His play and song,
'Tain't no ways to de school-house
And yet, de road seems long.

"He's sich a little feller
But he's larnin' fine to-day;
And yet, his mammy miss him,
'Caze dat's his mammy's way."

By and by the going off to college and the boarding school. By and by the son starts in business with some far distant state as the place chosen to commence the ladder climb of success. By and by the day of orange blossoms, the solemn vows and departure 'mid showers of rice and gratulations, leaving the ever so eloquent empty room and vast loneliness. Thrice blessed it is midst all such changes and partings to be able to believe and say:

"The Lord watch between me and thee while we are absent one from another."

Likewise, there are the college friendships and associations that we make and must perforce break. Precious exceedingly is the fellowship of

the days in class-room, in dormitory and fraternity. But these days must end. Commencement comes. The old chapel is full to the doors; there are music and speeches and flowers in profusion. And then the hour arrives when are spoken the good-byes, the God-bless-you's, and like a dream delightful the school days are gone. Some friendships thus made will last forever, but separations are inevitable, and some will part on the campus that commencement week to meet in life no more. Thus again 'tis blessed to be able to breathe this prayer of faith:

“The Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another.”

The church, the household of faith, the family of the disciples of Jesus, experience continually this same heartbreak. Men and women with whom we have worked side by side in Sunday school, worshipped with in prayer meeting and communed with in solemn meditation at the table of the Lord, go out from among us and the old church knows them no more. To distant state and city, and even across the seas, they go, leaving us saddened and lonely. Or, it is we who go, leaving a church that has been, next to our own home, the holiest spot on earth. Oh, the tug of the heart in such separations! Ask those who know. They will answer if they can—if they can. Inexpressibly blessed is it to be able to say as these ties of companionship are broken:

"The Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another."

It is worth more than a passing interest to observe just here that the word "absent" in this benediction beautiful may also be translated "hidden." It will be found that the latter word is set over opposite this text in the margin of the American Standard version of the Holy Scriptures. Translated thus, the benediction brings a new meaning.

"The Lord watch between me and thee while we are 'hidden' one from another." Alas, we are too often "hidden" one from another though not absent in body. We do not understand one another always, we are liable to misjudge and wrongfully estimate actions. There is a better way. Let human judgment be suspended. Let God be our judge. Let Him be the arbiter. Commit all our ways to Him. Then may we rest assured there will never be shipwreck of friendships, or barriers that will separate those who greatly loved but failed to "judge righteous judgment." If we are to "keep our friendships in constant repair" here is the great prescription:

"The Lord watch between me and thee when we are 'hidden' one from another."

II

Consider now this benediction as applied to those partings with the dear ones who precede us into the larger life.

Well do I recall my first knowledge of the word "Mizpah" and the phrases of this benediction. I was but a lad when first I felt the shock and mystery of death. My grandmother, whom I called "mother," and who upon the death of my own mother at my birth became to me a mother indeed, died after a brief illness. A year or more after her death, while sitting by the side of a favourite uncle, I took notice of a curious ring he wore. It was an initial ring and within the letter wrought into its shape were strands of grey hair, and engraven on the ring was the word "Mizpah." I asked what it meant. He said, "The strands of hair are mother's, and the word means 'The Lord watch between mother and you and me—all of us—while she is absent from us.'" It lies beyond me to describe my impression of this incident. To my boyish faith it seemed so beautifully clear, so simple and comforting. For me then Jacob's ladder was let down again and I beheld on it angels both descending and ascending, and thus did I reason: "Mother is gone from us, but the dear Heavenly Father still watches over her and likewise over us, guiding, protecting, blessing us all." Thank God for the faith of childhood

days. Oh, eyes that are weary and hearts that are sore, here is rest for your weariness and balm and healing for your hurts.

“O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope in years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.”

My memory goes back to the time when I left my boyhood home in a small Missouri town to enter the public schools of a large city. The aunt, who was a mother to me, had interested me in the constellations, and especially familiar and fascinating to me was The Great Bear, or “Dipper.” When I was leaving this aunt said to me, “Now that we are to be separated, our eyes can still look on the same stars and moon and the dear old ‘dipper.’” How distinctly I recall that first night away from home folks when I saw the “dipper” in the heavens and knew that the eyes of loved ones far distant were beholding it likewise. Why, I could have kissed the old dipper, if that had been possible. Like an old familiar friend, the kindly stars that form that best-known of constellations seemed to smile down upon that lad who gazed upon them in affectionate trust the score of years ago. A great calm stole over him and comforted him like a mother’s prayer.

In maturer years I have fallen back upon that boyhood experience and used it as steps Godward to the great truth that the Heavenly Father knows,

that He cares and watches over us, and loves us ever.

“When we are absent the one from the other,
Harder as every fresh parting must be,
Love that surpasseth the love of a brother,
Tenderly watcheth between me and thee.

“Slumbering not, sleeping not, through the long hours,
Israel's Watchman looks down from above;
Heareth this low murmured ‘Mizpah’ of ours,
Smiles on our trusting and blesseth our love.

“Absent or present, in joy or in meeting,
This thought be ours to soothe our distress:
One Eye—the same Eye—on both watch is keeping,
One Hand—the same Hand—is stretched out to bless.”

“The Lord watch between me and thee while
we are absent one from another. For Christ's
sake. Amen.”

O benediction beautiful, O love ineffable, O
comfort great!

THE PRINCE OF PEACE

PRAYER

Thou Father of the Lord Christ, we lift our voices in praise unto Thee at this blessed anniversary of His coming into the world. We praise Thee jubilantly for so rich and costly a Gift, and we praise Thee also, with deepest gratitude. It seemeth so wonderful to us, the lowly birth, the shepherds, the angel chorus, the shining star, and the wise men. The mystery and the glory of it all hold us as by a spell. May Christmas never grow old, or commonplace, or lose its glory and beauty for Thy grown-up children, Father! May Thy great Gift to the world move us to the giving of ourselves for others' sake in lowly and loving ministry. May our homes and family circles be brought nearer unto Thee by a wise and reverent use of this season on the part of parents. May commerce not crowd Christ's spirit out of this time of celebration, nor much merchandising dull our sense of Thee at this time of good cheer. Father of Christ, we pray for the hastening of that new day when wars shall have passed away forever, and peace shall breathe a benediction over all. Forgive us wherein we have gloried in the warlike spirit and make us ashamed wherein we have shown pride in military trappings and tinsel show. Grant that we may follow Thy leading now by the way of tribunals and mediations and thereby reach amicable adjustments of all differences. Thy blessing be upon the present endeavours in the realm of capital and labour toward just arbitrations and fruitful co-operations. O Prince of Peace, lead Thou on! Father of Mercy, we pray for those who are in rebellion against Thee, that Thy love, as revealed in Christ, may break down every barrier and room shall be made in every heart for the Great Guest. Inspire within us a hunger and thirst after righteousness and a passion for peace, both with Thee, our Heavenly Father, and with Thy children, our brothers all. In the Name of the Prince of Peace we pray. Amen.

XVII

THE PRINCE OF PEACE

"He is our peace."—*Ephesians 2: 14.*

CHRISTMAS is the one season of the year above all others when even the most prosaic mind tends to poetic thought and childhood's splendid fancies. Now, if ever, haloes of heavenly glory hover close to this weary world and Jacob's ladder is let down again, while wondering eyes behold angels both descending and ascending. This is the birthday of joy. This is the anniversary of love. This is the festival of gift-giving in memory of God's gift to the world. Under the spell of this season's magic and mystery I should like to fancy myself a care-taker in the Gardens of Holy Writ, gathering here and there a fragrant flower and clustering them together in modest arrangement to present them to you for profit and enjoyment this, the morning of Christmas Eve.

And from Isaiah I take this full-blown rose of promise: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

And from Luke's exquisite cluster this: "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth *peace* among men, in whom He is well pleased."

And this from Jesus' very own: "These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye may have *peace*. In the world ye have tribulations; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

And from St. Paul this slip of evergreen: "He is our *peace*."

There are no more beautiful flowers than these from God's garden. May they refresh us all this morning, and delight us in mind and spirit. And let us thank God that here are flowers that will never fade, nor lose their fragrance ever.

And yet, full of poetry and heavenly mystery as Christmas is, it is not without its solemn side. We are so far from Christ's ideal; we have come so little of the way He so grandly trod—the way of Peace. 'Tis of Him as the Prince of Peace I want especially to speak this morning.

There are above one hundred and sixty names and titles applied to Jesus in the Holy Scriptures. All of them are meaningful. Immanuel; "God with us"; the Alpha and Omega; the Lion of the Tribe of Judah; the Good Shepherd; the Man of Sorrows; the Messiah; the Great High Priest; the Prince of Life; King of Kings and Lord of Lords; the Lamb of God; the Prince of Peace.

Especially meaningful is this title—*Prince of Peace*.

It is a significant, as well as an interesting fact that for the first time in many years the world was hushed in profound peace when Jesus was born. The great temples of Janus in Rome, which when standing open proclaimed that war was raging, were closed when the heralding angels announced the birth of the *Prince of Peace*, and exultingly sang:

“Glory to God in the highest,
Peace on earth.”

Jesus is the Prince of Social Peace. He is the great Peacemaker. To belligerent Peter, with drawn sword, red with blood from the servant of the high priest, Jesus said: “Put up again thy sword into its place, for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.”

War is a relic of barbarism. It is anti-Christian. It is one of the great scourges of humanity. The cost in human life is appalling. The cost in monetary values is stupendous. The cost in suffering is unspeakably great. Since 1850 the population of the world has doubled; its indebtedness, chiefly for war purposes, has quadrupled. It was eight billions of dollars in 1850, it is now more than thirty-two billions. Peace on earth comes slowly. We build a battleship a year at a cost of ten millions. It costs a million annually to maintain one of these warships, and in fifteen years it is out of

date and fit only to serve as a target, or to be sold as junk. We spend sixty-five per cent. of our national revenue for armaments, pensions and interest on war debts, leaving only one-third for congress, the judiciary and executive departments, coast guard, post-offices, lighthouses, census, waterways and the like. The causes of war are love of money and vainglory, sordid ambitions, racial pride and spirit of conquest. Only the spirit of the Prince of Peace in the life of a people can drive out these evils from the Temple National.

“Were half the power that fills the world with terror,
Were half the wealth bestowed on camps and courts,
Given to redeem the human mind from error,
There were no need of arsenals or forts!

“The warrior’s name would be a name abhorred!
And every nation that should lift again
Its hand against a brother, on its forehead
Would wear for evermore the brand of Cain!”

Jesus is also the Prince of Industrial Peace. There are wars other than those on fields where shot and shell fall thick and fast, dealing out death and spilling human blood. To keep my naturally optimistic spirit balanced with certain gruesome facts I study occasionally the following statistics, which are as bloody as narratives of Waterloo, Moscow or Gettysburg.

During the four years of the Civil War about 150,000 men were killed in action, or died of wounds in the two armies. At present rates we

in the United States do to death an equal number in only seventeen months.

Gettysburg was the greatest battle in that great struggle; and it is said that after Pickett's famous charge one could walk across the field in front of Cemetery Ridge without touching foot to ground. And yet, in these times of undisturbed peace we kill men, women and children enough in a single year to furnish nineteen fields of Gettysburg with corpses. Gettysburg was fought but once; wars come to an end; their horrors cease. But the horrors of peace are as endless as the procession of years, each of which demands an increased toll of victims.

Our eyes are but partially opened to the horrors of Industrial War, wherein men are held to be cheaper than machinery. Only of very late have we begun in all seriousness to remedy these evils, and safeguard human life.

I reread only recently a parable that greatly impressed me.* Five men were cast upon the shores of an uninhabited island. One of them was injured in the shipwreck; one was very much broken in strength by exposure and sorrow; one was small of stature; one was simply the average man; the last one was a man of great size and strength. His independence and self-assertion corresponded with his body. It was soon dis-

* James H. Ecob, D.D., in *Homiletic Review* for May, 1911.

covered that the fruits which must be their principal article of food grew on a high table-land, very difficult of access. You see at a glance that these five men are disturbed with reference to the means of life by a very relentless principle. In fact, they are placed in line and kept remorselessly in line by that one factor, the comparative amount of physical strength. If they pool their strength for the good of the whole, each contributing according to his ability, theirs may be a happy community. But if they accept the law of natural distribution, you can readily prophesy the outcome. This is precisely what did happen. The big, strong man mounted easily to the delightful table-land, where grew abundant food, where fine airs blew and beautiful prospects delighted the eye. At first he made daily trips, returning with food for his comrades, and with them kept watch for the coming of a ship. In this labour the average man was his helper, the small man did his best and the other two were little more than dependent and helpless. But after a time the strong man grew tired of this service to his fellows. The delightful table-land, with its abundance and health and beauty, attracted him more and more, till at last he lived there all the time, and let the average man be his middleman between himself and his dependent fellowmen below. When at last the ship arrived this is what they found: The injured man had died, the sick man was in sorry plight, the

small man was half starved, the average man was what he always is and the big man on his table-land was fat and flourishing, and loud in his praises of the beautiful island.

This parable fairly describes our society of to-day, which, while it is vastly better than it ever was, and steadily improving, is still far from a Christian society.

The teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, if followed out in principle or spirit, will bring peace between labour and capital, and bridge the chasm that gulfs so frightfully between. There are just three attitudes that Capital and Labour may take. First, fight out their grievances to the bitter end; second, form a combination of Labour-Capital against the third party, the long-suffering public; third, arbitrate their differences and by co-operation thereby attain amicable adjustment. The first is unthinkable, the second fraught with many perils, the third is wise, satisfactory and Christian. And as yet this method of co-operation has never been really tried.

The Los Angeles dynamite tragedy supplied labour with an awful lesson of the futility of violence, and, be it said to the everlasting credit of Unionism, practically every organization in the land denounced the crime and repudiated the offenders.

In a few instances some employers were ungenerous enough to take a sort of malicious triumph

in the tragedy and seek to prove by it the essential criminality of all labour unions. Fortunately this spirit was exceptional, else the breach between the two would have widened still more.

Jesus has pointed to the way of Industrial Peace. "All things therefore, whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them." "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

In Matthew 18:15-17 Jesus' advice for those who have grievances approaches a definite peace programme. Certainly it is a plea for arbitration. Remembering that the "church" of Jesus' day possessed judicial powers, listen to these wise words of the great Peacemaker: "And if thy brother sin against thee, go show him his fault between thee and him alone; if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the church; and if he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican."

Jesus is also the Prince of Personal Peace. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God. Oh, the misery, the heartache, the suffering of

weary thousands who have searched the world over for peace and found it not. Longfellow in one stanza of his "Bridge" describes the emotions of multitudes before they found peace and joy in Jesus Christ:

"For my heart was hot and restless
And my life was full of care,
And the burden laid upon me
Seemed greater than I could bear."

Then the blessed peace was found, and lo! skies of faith brightened and clouds of doubt forever rolled away:

"But now it has fallen from me,
It is buried in the sea,
And only the sorrow of others
Throws its shadows over me."

The other day I looked on two productions of the artist Doré's pictures. One was entitled "Peace." It showed a quiet, restful village scene. In the distance a church lifted its slender spire toward the skies. In the streets children were playing. Leaning out over a balcony a fair young girl was talking with her lover-lad, who stood below looking up as Romeo to his Juliet. A flock of sheep were being driven leisurely through the street by a maid, and over all the blessing of contentment and peace rested like the benediction that follows after prayer.

The second picture was entitled "War." It was the same scene, but sadly changed. The church

was in ruins. Gone from the balcony was the fair young girl, and gone also was her lover-lad. Gone from the street the playing children and gone the flocks of sheep, and instead a herd of bellowing cattle, wild with the smell of blood, tramped heavily over the dead and dying men and women. Great clouds of smoke hung like a pall over the village, and the picture was tragic in gore and gloom.

These two pictures portray faithfully the inner lives of those at war with Christ and those that are at peace and oneness with God through Christ.

Christmas to many of us to-day is not, and cannot be, what it was a year ago. Time and tide have ruthlessly taken their toll from home and circle of friends. Sorrow, separation and death have visited us, and yet withal, O blessed Faith, "Sweet peace the gift of God's love" abides, and the Prince of Peace reigns in our hearts.

THE BADGE OF DISCIPLESHIP

PRAYER

Our Father and our God, we come to Thee in prayer, we come not servilely as slaves, but affectionately as children. We come gratefully, for Thou hast done wondrous things for us. We come contritely and penitently, for we have sinned deeply and persistently. Forgive us our transgressions, we pray for Thy Name's sake, and lead us in the great, new way of love, over which the Son of Man has gone before us. In our careers thus far we have tried many forces and failed; make us of the mind now to try this unfailing force of Christ's love. Rid us of the desire for showy gifts and the ambition to shine in some conspicuous place that men may behold our greatness, and by Thy Spirit prosper us in the noble quest of this, the Supreme Gift. Teach us to love our enemies in word and deed, and make us to know the impossibility of Thy forgiveness while we refuse to forgive those who have wronged us. Cause Calvary to come often before our eyes, and may the words, "Father, forgive, they know not what they do," sound in our ears like a sweet-toned bell calling us to worship, until we shall aspire to love even as Jesus Christ loved us and laid down His life for our sake. In the Name of the great Lover of our souls we pray. Amen.

XVIII

THE BADGE OF DISCIPLESHIP

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.”—*John* 13: 34-35.

ALMOST every other man one meets nowadays wears some sort of insignia, a badge, a button, a pin or an emblem. How familiar some of the designs are! For instance, the square and compass, the three links, the shield and helmet, the elk's head with its wide-spread antlers,—to mention but a few of the most conspicuous. I am not criticising that custom. I am but inviting attention to the popularity of the custom. Such methods of identification and showing the colours have their use, and they suggest in a way my subject, “The Badge of Discipleship.” What is it? What is it that indicates a Christian, that singles him out, that identifies him? By what sign may a disciple of Jesus conquer? How can we know that one is a follower of the Christ?

Time was when it was thought, and still is by some, that Christians should be identified by peculiarity of garment, by eccentricity or novelty of

dress, such as a broad-brimmed, bell-crowned hat, a suit of sombre gray, or garments fastened by means of hooks and eyes instead of buttons. Or, sometimes this view expressed itself by a certain style of wearing the beard, on the part of the men, or the manner of dressing the hair, on the part of the women. Such peculiarities may distinguish a sect, but never necessarily a Christian. There are Christians in such sects, serene souls; but there are also Christians, serene spirits, who attach no importance whatever to such things.

Others have seemed to think the Badge of Discipleship consisted in religious controversy, in the ability to argue fluently for party or denominational Shibboleths, the facility to repeat a theological formula or recite a creed, insisting the while that every one accept it or be condemned. Such a practice is rarely profitable, and the ability to argue even the truth is not the real insignia of the Christian life. What then is the Badge of Discipleship?

Here is the answer of Jesus, spoken too within the solemn shadow of His betrayal, arrest and crucifixion. He said it after He had washed and wiped dry the feet of His disciples, and while their minds were still confused and strangely moved by such an example of service and humility. He said it in that last, long, familiar discourse, so tender and beautiful the world will never cease to admire and repeat it. He said:

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

Love then, not any peculiarity of dress, or fashion of wearing the hair or beard; love, not argumentation, debate or dogma; love, active, unselfish, Christ-like love, is the badge of Christian Discipleship. This teaching is of Jesus and therefore it is supreme, but it is known that it found large echo and strong emphasis on the part of His apostles. There is not the time to enter into a detailed examination of the New Testament Scriptures, nor is it necessary. Look at Paul, at Peter, at John—the three master personalities of the early days of Christianity.

First Corinthians, the thirteenth chapter, is Paul's classic on love, and there he affirms that love is greater than hope, greater than faith, the supreme grace. In Romans, thirteenth chapter, he writes that love is the fulfilment of the law. All through his epistles Paul urges the young disciple to “put on love,” to “abound more and more in love.” With Paul love was the Badge of Discipleship.

John is known to us of to-day as the apostle of love. Out of scores of passages, I remind you of but one, “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren.”

Most assuredly with John love was the Badge of Discipleship.

Peter, in that familiar and oft-quoted passage in his second Epistle, first chapter, puts love at the summit of that vast assemblage of graces, such as knowledge, godliness, self-control and virtue, and in the eighth verse of the fourth chapter he says, "Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves, for love covereth a multitude of sins." Certainly with Peter love was the Badge of Discipleship.

If the law of love was large in the teaching of the apostles and early disciples, it was even larger in their daily life. Tertullian, writing within a century and a half of Jesus, said, "See how these Christians love one another, and how ready they are to die for one another."

The kind of love referred to by Jesus is not a sentimental thing, not a surface emotional quality, but something virile, passionate and embodying an active principle. The word "charity" is not adequate to describe this law of Christ. Charity as we use the term to-day means alms-giving, which is only one expression of love, and by no means the highest. Benevolence and philanthropy are terms that come close to the Christian idea of the word love, but even these terms are inadequate. Try, if you can, to forget every definition you ever heard of love; try to banish your own conception of the word and listen to the new meaning put

into the word by Jesus Christ. The Badge of Discipleship is to love as Jesus loved.

Christ's love was self-forgetful love. He pleased not Himself. How long can we forget ourselves? How long can we sink ourselves out of sight for others' sake? One who cannot quite ever forget himself will not think much of others. For one thing, he will not have time. A man who is fearful always that he will be forgotten usually will be, and ought to be forgotten.

Father Damien, the hero of the leper colony in the Sandwich Islands, was never heard of till his martyr's death, although he had been living a martyr's life among those dreadfully afflicted people. He sank himself and his ambitions below the horizon of the world and was lost in a mighty ministry for others, and now his name is blessed forever.

The measure of the love that is to be the Badge of Discipleship is to be like Christ's, and this means that it must be self-sacrificing. He "emptied Himself." He laid down His life. He endured the cross. Have we ever sacrificed any wish, any ambition for Christ's sake? Have we ever sacrificed any time for Christian work? Have we ever promptly refused a profitable business proposition in order to do a definite Christian service? Have we actually ever sacrificed any money for a good cause? Have we ever really denied ourselves something that we very much

wanted and took the money for some one else more needy than ourselves? If not, we do not and cannot know the meaning of this word "love."

Once in a while we see here and now the expression of love, so deep, so unselfish, as to be worthy of likening it to Christ's love. Such a story is that of Barbara, in the *British Weekly*, told by an English surgeon to a few of his friends.

Of all the cases which came to the eye institute, nothing had touched him more than that of a girl from a poor, struggling home, who, having seen but a little of the beauty of the world around her, seemed doomed to blindness.

"You know," said Wilson, the surgeon in charge of the case, to a group of his fellow surgeons, "that I am entirely optimistic by nature, and if there is at all a thread of hope to which I can cling, I will put my whole weight on it rather than give up the battle, but there was nothing in Barbara's case that seemed to give us a chance."

Everything was done that the loving skill of a great practitioner could think of, but Barbara's sight was doomed.

"One day I was leaving the institute," continued Wilson, "when a woman stopped me at the door. She was just a workingman's wife, her cheeks wrinkled, and her mouth touched a little with the cares of a working home. I could see at the corners of the eyes the lines caused by

many a late night's sewing and straining over threading of needles when the household was asleep. A great spirit of calm seemed, however, enfolding her, and a strong purpose spoke through her voice as she said to me:

“‘May I see you for a little, Doctor?’

“‘Certainly,’ I replied, ‘come in.’ And I returned to my room.

“We stood for a moment looking at one another, and then she went on:

“‘I am Barbara's mother. I want to thank you for your goodness to her. She has been telling us at home the wonderful things you do at the institute here—how the blind receive sight, and the lame walk. But the most wonderful thing that she told us was the way that you graft bones and skin to make them grow where they are needed. And Barbara's father and I have been talking often, in the night when she was sleeping, about it all; and a thought came to me. I have enjoyed His blessing of light for fifty-seven years, and I wondered, Doctor, if with your skill you could take my two eyes and graft them on to Barbara's? I will be content to go in darkness for the little bit of the journey left me, if Barbara could walk in light!’

“I tell you I could only muster up courage to say, ‘It is impossible,’ or I was afraid my tears would shame me in the presence of this brave, calm peasant woman, ready to lay down what was

as sweet as life itself for the sake of her little girl!

"But this is not even the end of it. For, somehow, from that moment, when we had all, except that mother's heart, given up trying, hope began its work, and Barbara is coming now by herself to the institute. And the other day when I held up my two fingers and said, 'How many, Barbara?' the eyes that I had despaired of looked at me and she said, 'Two.'

"Now, you fellows, since that quiet woman spoke to me in that room of mine, ready to give up her eyes for her daughter's healing, I have thought more often of my own dead mother's love than ever in my life before.

"And I do not believe that since Calvary was there a bigger sacrifice ready than this poor working woman's, who offered God's greatest gift for the sake of her little child."

A weakness of our present-day Christianity is that it lacks the strong, heroic note. We are not making any real sacrifice, not doing any real denying of ourselves. The Cross with many of us is a figure of speech, or ornament for necklace or watch fob. We have been trying to satisfy ourselves with mere nominal membership in the church and "leanness of soul" has been our reward.

The church is not the Badge of Discipleship, nor baptism, nor the Lord's Supper, nor the Bible

—important as these are. Love, Christian love is the badge by which all men shall know that you are disciples of Christ.

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.” By unforgettable example Jesus gave these words a tremendous meaning. It was in the upper chamber in Jerusalem near unto the hour of His betrayal, and there in the solemn shadow of the cross the disciples fell to arguing who should be the greatest in the kingdom. And so interested were they in the controversy that they neglected that Oriental custom of removing the dust from their feet before sitting down to a meal. In the absence of a servant they should each have done this lowly service for the other, but with minds set on the matter of earthly greatness they neglected the menial service of foot-washing entirely. Jesus came into their midst, and, taking in the situation at a glance, with no word of rebuke girded Himself with a towel and, taking a basin, began to wash their travel-stained feet. How vividly that scene as I saw it acted on the stage at Oberammergau rises before me. The little group of amazed and humiliated disciples! Anton Lang as Jesus of Nazareth in a plain, gray garb washing and wiping dry even the feet of Judas. That scene to me was as holy as Geth-

semane and more melting than the crucifixion. By a far stretch of fancy it may be possible to conceive of the disciples forgetting what Jesus *said* to them that night in the upper room, but under no circumstances can we imagine the twelve forgetting what Jesus *did* for them there.

Love! Love translated into service! This is the insignia of the Christian, and by this sign shall we conquer.

“Who seeks for heaven alone to save his soul
May keep the path, but will not reach the goal;
While he who walks in love may wander far,
Yet God will bring him where the blessed are.”

**THE RELIGION OF ABRAHAM
LINCOLN**

PRAYER

God of our fathers, we thank Thee for the patient, kindly Lincoln, by whom Thou didst lead our nation during those purgatorial years of the Civil War. We thank Thee for his humility, his freedom from foolish pride, and the Christlike quality of mercy which so transfigured him. We rejoice that this great leader leaned on Thee; that he believed in "the Almighty Architect," and found peace and power and comfort in prayer. We thank Thee, Blessed Father, for the example of Lincoln's study of the Scriptures, and the storing of his mind with precious passages from Holy Writ. We praise Thee for his notable example of self-control, his forgiving spirit, and his wide charity. For the glorious company of patriots who have given of their best to advance the cause of freedom we render unto Thee, O Thou Judge of Nations, our deepest gratitude. O Father, raise us up in every generation men of this generous, ample type, of this same large mold. May the young men of our own day set themselves resolutely to tasks as high and holy as Lincoln's by battling against the foes of sobriety, purity and justice. May there be raised up from among our youth great leaders of the Lincoln heart, to bring us out of the distress of industrial bondage, the cursed slavery of gold and the galling yoke of intemperance. God of the nations, bless the President who guides our nation now. May he seek wisdom of Thee, and learn of Him who was called "the Prince of Peace." May all who are in high office know assuredly that righteousness exalteth a nation, but that sin is a reproach to any people. In the Name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

XIX

THE RELIGION OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN*

"For he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible."
—*Hebrews* 11: 27.

AGAIN we come to that season of the year when our thoughts turn to the great and awful conflict of the early sixties; to the time when by special service we seek to hallow the memory of the vast multitude who fell on battlefield, died in hospital or perished in prison pens. It is peculiarly fitting, too, that Memorial Day should come in the month of May, the month when Mother Nature, having put off the widow's weeds of winter, comes forth beautiful in spring's brightest and loveliest apparel. And on this, as on every other occasion when the period of the Civil War is considered, the predominant and overtowering figure is that of the kindly, loving and loyal Lincoln.

This is not strange. Great men are more to be revered than great principles. In the abstract, principles are powerless; it is only when they are embodied in a human life that they become potent. So it came to pass that the mighty principles

* Delivered before the Patriotic Societies of Bloomington, Illinois, May 24th, 1908.

which underlay the "irrepressible conflict" found their incarnation in the life and labours of Abraham Lincoln.

In some respects the year 1809 was the most eventful of the nineteenth century. Its eventfulness lies in the fact that it was the birth year of a group of men whose life and labours are monumental. It gave to poetry the erratic but brilliant Edgar Allan Poe, the witty Oliver Wendell Holmes and the great lyric master, Alfred Tennyson. It gave to music Chopin and Mendelssohn, to science Charles Darwin, and to Great Britain Honourable William Ewart Gladstone. Eighteen hundred and nine was also the birth year of Samuel F. Smith, author of "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," but that which makes the year ever memorable to Americans is the fact that on the twelfth day of the second month it gave to the world the great-hearted patriot, Abraham Lincoln.

The Apostle Paul in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians affirms that there are three graces that abide, faith, hope and love, and that love is the greatest of these. In the life of Abraham Lincoln these graces are to be found in large and luminous quality. Think of his faith. "For he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." Lincoln was as truly a pioneer of faith as was the "Father of the Faithful," when "he went out not knowing whither he went." Some men's lives are never fruitful for good because they do not

possess or have not cultivated this faith faculty. They ask to see the distant scene. They must see the way to the end, or else they will not move out and on at all. Let it be said reverently that God cannot use such men in the furtherance of His wise plans for humanity. They are "choked channels" through which even Divine Power cannot work. Contrariwise there are the great souls who, feeling within themselves the thrill of the Divine Current, yield their lives to it with abandon. Martin Luther was such a man. Convinced that he was right, never doubting the final issue, he went on his course, which led straight into persecution and threat of death.

No man in the public life of America had a stronger faith in the guidance of God and in the ultimate triumph of right over wrong than our first martyred president. What a notable answer that was which he made to a minister who expressed the hope that the Lord was on the side of the Union. "I know the Lord is always on the side of right," he declared, then added with deep feeling, "but God is my witness that it is my constant anxiety and prayer that both myself and this nation should be on the Lord's side." Perhaps none of Lincoln's speeches reveal his sublime trust in God so clearly and at the same time so pathetically as does his farewell address on leaving Springfield.

A crowd of at least a thousand had assembled

to see their old friend and neighbour depart for Washington. It was a raw and dismal day with a cold rain falling. The enthusiasm of the people was dampened by the foreboding of national strife and difficulty, as well as by the sombreness of the day. Just as the train was about to leave the station, Mr. Lincoln came to the rear platform of his car and, lifting his hand, said: "My friends, no one not in my situation can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place and the kindness of this people I owe everything. Here I have lived a quarter of a century and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born and one is buried.

"I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested on Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail.

"Trusting in Him who can go with me and remain with you and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell."

But did Lincoln believe in Christ as the unique Son of God? Bishop Matthew Simpson, who saw more of this side of Lincoln's character than any

other man, and who delivered the eulogy at his grave, said that he did. Such a testimony from such a source is of great worth. In conversing with Mr. Bateman, State Superintendent of Schools, Lincoln said: "I am nothing, but the truth is everything. I know I am right, for I know liberty is right, for Christ teaches it, and Christ is God." There is evidence that in Mr. Lincoln's early years he had doubts as to the divinity of Christ, but there is also abundant evidence to show that these doubts were lost in the grand Christ-like fortitude and humility of the maturer man.

I would not be understood as affirming that Mr. Lincoln held any particular view as to the deity of Jesus or that his faith could be squared in every particular with what is commonly called the orthodox position. I only insist, what the records will bear me out in saying, that this great man grew into an increasing appreciation of the claims of Christ, and that in a sublime spirit of love and faith he became one of His disciples.

Lincoln was a constant and profound student of the Bible. His public speeches are so enriched with Biblical phraseology that at times they seem grandly prophetic.

To Joshua Speed he said: "I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible. Take all of this Book on reason that you can and the balance on faith and you will live and die a better man."

On another occasion when the coloured men of

Baltimore presented him with a Bible, he said: "In regard to the Great Book, I have only to say that it is the best gift which God has given to man. All the good from the Saviour of the world is communicated in this Book."

Mr. Lincoln believed in prayer. He often knelt before his Maker and poured out his heart in fervent supplications. He prayed for the nation, for the success of his army, and even for the enemy. He more than once declared that the victories at Vicksburg and Gettysburg came in answer to his prayer. To Bishop Simpson, who called once when the clouds were thickest, Lincoln said: "Bishop, I feel the need of prayer as never before. Please pray for me," and the two men then fell on their knees in prayer to God for strength and guidance.

But the crowning glory of Lincoln's religious life was his love. He was one of the tenderest, most forgiving of men. He never spoke unkindly of any man, not even of an enemy. "It was his nature," said General Grant, "to find excuses for his adversaries." Indeed there has not been another man in America's public life so supreme in gentleness and broad sympathy as Lincoln, though William McKinley was much like him in this gracious and Christ-like quality.

Consider Lincoln's own beautiful testimony:

"I have never knowingly planted a thorn in any human heart, but I have always endeavoured

to pluck a thorn and plant a rose wherever a rose would grow."

The incidents of his goodness of heart are so many and so rich that he who would single out one or two as illustrative of this luminous trait is bewildered by the vastness and wealth of available material. In some particulars I should regard the following as one of the most touching:

One day when the President was with the troops that were fighting at the front, the wounded, both Union and Confederate, began to pour in.

As one stretcher was passing Lincoln he heard the voice of a lad calling to his mother in agonizing tones. Lincoln's great heart filled. He forgot the crisis of the moment. He ordered the carriers to stop. Kneeling and bending over the wounded soldier, he asked, "What can I do for you, my boy?"

"Oh, you will do nothing for me," he replied. "You are a Yankee, I can't hope that my message will ever reach my mother."

Lincoln, in tears, his voice full of tenderest love, convinced the lad of his sincerity and he gave his good-bye words without reserve. The President directed them copied, and ordered that they be sent that night, with a flag of truce, into the enemy's lines.

Lincoln wept with those who wept. More than once he said, "I have not suffered for the South, I have suffered *with* the South."

The heart-broken mothers who visited him at the White House and appealed to him to save their boys from prison pen or sentence of court-martial found a man like unto Him who stood up in that synagogue at Nazareth and said, "He hath sent Me to proclaim release to captives, and to set at liberty them that are bruised."

How radiantly the great love of Lincoln shines in that closing paragraph of his "Second Inaugural":

"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphans, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

Mr. Lincoln never united with any church, though he believed in the church. We have his own explanation that the long, involved creeds of the various churches perplexed him, nor could he bring himself sincerely to subscribe to them. Said he, "When a church will make as its sole attitude of faith the Scripture, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and thy neighbour as thyself,' that church will I join!"

The average man has need of every help and influence that makes for the growth of his spiritual

nature, and disregards such at the price of irreparable loss.

Mr. Lincoln's life was great not because he failed to appreciate at its full value the church and its ordinances, but despite that fact.

It is interesting to summarize the evidences that go to show how deeply religious Mr. Lincoln's nature was and, in his later years at least, a follower of the Great Teacher, save in church membership. This evidence may be summed up under eight points:

1. The phraseology that Mr. Lincoln used both in his speeches, his correspondence and state papers is that of the orthodox Christian. This is not saying that Mr. Lincoln was such, but that in his references to the Deity, the Scriptures, the church and the Christ he writes like one.

2. He was friendly to the church, contributed to its support and attended its services frequently. In 1849 the Lincolns took a pew in the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, and they occupied it regularly till they went to Washington in 1861. While President, Mr. Lincoln attended Dr. P. D. Gurley's church, the New York Avenue Presbyterian, where he was a regular attendant and pewholder.

3. He was a profound and diligent student of the Scriptures; his speeches and writings abound in allusions to Biblical incidents and texts. No other man in America's public life quoted so much

Scripture in his public addresses as did Mr. Lincoln.

4. He was a believer in the efficacy of prayer, and was himself a prayerful man. What philosophy or theory of prayer he held we do not know, for he never explained. That he prayed often and earnestly during his career as President is so well known that it has almost become a platitude to speak of Lincoln as a "man of prayer."

5. He had a very strong and beautiful hope in immortality. In a letter written January 12, 1851, to his stepbrother, John D. Johnson, he refers feelingly to his father's approaching death, and then expressed this beautiful sentiment: "Say to him that if we could meet now it is doubtful whether it would not be more painful than pleasant, but that if it be his lot to go now, he will soon have a joyous meeting with many loved ones gone before, and where the rest of us, through the help of God, hope ere long to join them."

6. He believed in a benignant Providence, the expression of the will of One whom he spoke and wrote of as "The Heavenly Father" and "The Almighty Architect."

7. The conversation he is said to have had with Honourable Newton Bateman and with several visitors at the White House on religious themes, in which he declared his belief in the unique sonship of Christ, have never been convincingly controverted.

8. The very general impression of those who stood nearest him during the latter years of his life, that his was a devout and spiritual nature, patterned, greatly strengthened and sweetened by the Gethsemane into which his high office led him.

No one communion can ever claim Abraham Lincoln to the exclusion of the others. He was greatly and grandly, yet withal simply, a Christian in love and tenderness. His Christianity was unique, non-sectarian and undenominational.

Lincoln's mother and father were Baptists, his stepmother was a Disciple, his wife was a Presbyterian, and during his residence in Washington, Matthew Simpson, the great Methodist bishop, was often his spiritual adviser. In earlier life, Lincoln's intellectual difficulty as to the deity of Christ classed him with the Unitarians, so it has come to pass that all of the above-named communions have at one time or another claimed him as of their faith. This in itself is an extraordinary and unique tribute to a character that was simply, naturally and beautifully religious.

With the passing years, the limitations of Abraham Lincoln's religious views which were intellectual and technical, will grow less and less apparent, while the great basic principles of the Christian faith which found such large expression in his daily life, will grow more and more apparent until they quite transfigure him, if indeed they have not already done that.

"And so they buried Lincoln? Strange and vain!
Has any creature thought of Lincoln hid
In any vault, 'neath any coffin lid,
In all the years since that wild spring of pain?
'Tis false,—he never in the grave hath lain.
You could not bury him although you slid
Upon his clay the Cheops pyramid,
Or heaped it with the Rocky Mountain chain.

"They slew themselves; they but set Lincoln free.
In all the earth his great heart beats as strong,
Shall beat while pulses throb to chivalry
And burn with hate of tyranny and wrong.
Whoever will, may find him, anywhere
Save in the tomb. Not there—he is not there."

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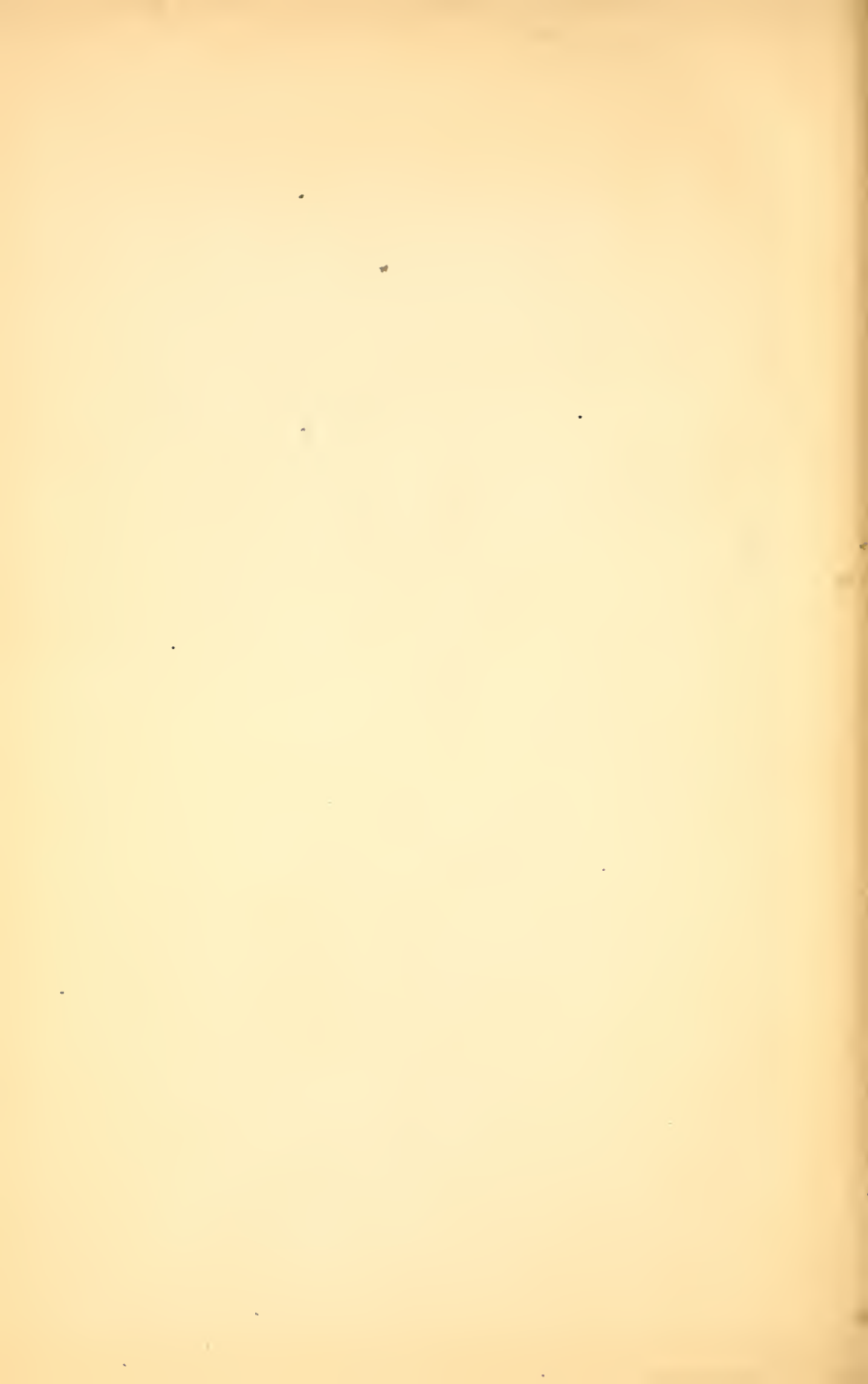
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